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The Toys

My little son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes
And mov'd and spoke in quick grown-up wise,
Having my law the servant time obey'd
I struck him, and dismiss'd
With hand words and unkind, being dead.
His mother, who was patient, being dead.
Then, feeling lost his grief stand his sleep
I visited his bed,
But found him sumb'ring deep,
With dark'nd eyelids, and deep lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet.
And I, with moan,
Kissing away his tears, left o'ars of my own;
For, on a table drawn beside his head,
He had put, with his head,
A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone,

a piece of glass abraded by the beach
and two or seven shells,
A bottle with bluebells,
and two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,
To comfort his sad heart.
So when that night I pray'd
To God, I wept, and said:
Ah, when at last we lie with franced heart,
Not seeing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of that toys
we made our joys,
How weakly understood
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I, whom Thou hast mended from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say
'I will be sorry for this childishness.'

Conventy Patmore

THE
CHILD SET IN THE MIDST
BY MODERN POETS

("And He took a little child and set him in the midst of them.")

EDITED BY WILFRID MEYNELL.

With a facsimile of the MS. of "The Toys," by COVENTRY PATMORE.



THE

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DEDICATION.

TO
The Mother
OF
SEBASTIAN
MONICA
EVERARD
MADELINE
VIOLA
VIVIAN
OLIVE
AND
FRANCIS.

860713

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PREFACE.



THESE are Poems about Children, not for them : gathered together for mature Readers to whom the Child is already dear and delightful, and to whom he shall be yet dearer and delightfuller before the Modern Poet has done with him. Such Readers must mostly be Parents : since intimacy with the Child is the key to this Literature of the Child. But the Parent, even while he is interpreting the Poet, will discover that the Poet in turn unexpectedly interprets the Parent, and gives the Child a new meaning and glory.

The Child has at last taken his proportionate place in Poetry. The nineteenth century has done two things for literature—it has put man on a lover's footing with nature, and it has, one may almost say,

discovered the Child. Him the Modern Poets have
Set in the Midst of us, even as he was Set in the
Midst of men by the Lord of Poets.

We read love's tender lessons taught
As only weakness can :
God has His small interpreters—
The child must teach the man.

We wander wide through evil years,
The eyes of faith grow dim ;
But he is freshest from His hands
And nearest unto Him.

So Mr. Whittier sings, and his words are well
enough as in part a text for this collection.

Homer's home-group, with Astyanax perturbed
by Hector's plume, has given place to Mr. Coventry
Patmore's innermost circle after all the husks of the
community have been penetrated :

In the centre then he showed a tent
Where, laughing soft, a woman bent
Over her babe ; and, her above,
Leaned, in his turn, a graver love.
" Behold the two idolatries
By which," cried he, " the world defies
Chaos and death ; and for whose sake
All else must war and work and wake."

Where Achilles is made to talk lightly of the little
maiden who blockades her mother's path, and pulls
her gown to be carried, the modern poet has a
nobler vision of the child "fretted by sallies of his
mother's kisses, with light upon him from his

father's eyes." Sappho had cognizance of the human baby—among other animals :

Hesperus brings the goat to rest,
Brings the baby to the breast :

But the children's bedtime was never truly sung till the last half of our own century. How many white little beds, I wonder, have been nightly visited under the influence of Mrs. Piatt's "Last Words." I like to think of the multiplication of their number by this reprint of her perfect poem.

As Love took the likeness of Dido's child before he had access to her heart ; even so the God of Heaven became as a Little Child to enter the narrow heart of His own creatures. Great poetry upon the Nativity did not wait till our spacious age for its production ; and a collection brought down to date may yet be offered to the Reader in a separate form. It is not, therefore, attempted now and here. As a child, Christ came ; but the advent of the common child in poetry as the messenger of Heaven was delayed. He was still to appear as a chattel, a toy, an intruder—at best a blessing in disguise ; to be apologised for or to be patronised ; a peg for platitudes, an audience for lectures, a substitute for ourselves in the practice of small perfections. Arthur is a figure of the footlights, but Shakspeare formally offered homage to

The most replenished sweet work of nature,

and has real, if adult, feeling when Constance cries :

Grief fills the room up of my absent child ;
Lies on his bed ; walks up and down with me ;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me in all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garment with his form.

There is a hint of child-feeling in Mamillius, but of Mamillius his mother has little to say except :

Take the boy to you : he so troubles me
'Tis past enduring.

The child to whom Nicholas Breton makes his
" Sweet Lullaby " is

Thy father's shame, thy mother's grief.

Sephestia's child is imagined by Robert Greene as no more than his " mother's wag," while Sir Philip Sydney addresses his own :

Thy cries, O Babe, do set my head on aching !

The flower of Chivalry has withered down to that.

Matthew Prior is not content to take the little maid as she is—he peers at the future woman and rues :

For, as our different ages move
'Tis so ordained (would fate but mend it !)
That I shall be past making love
When she begins to comprehend it.

Mr. Frederick Locker, with a touch more delicate, has reversed the order. He sees his grandmother at seventy-nine and imagines her at seventeen :

What an arm—what a waist
For an arm !

Henry Vaughan seems indeed to have "intimations of immortality" in the Poetry of Childhood. His "striving eye"

Dazzles at it as at Eternity

in his verses on "Childhood"; and in "The Retreat" he says:

Happy those early days, when I
Shined in my angel-infancy!
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,
Or taught my soul to fancy ought
But a white celestial thought,
When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first love,
And looking back at that short space
Could get a glimpse of His bright face.

With that thought Wordsworth was to transform, when the time became due, the Child Poetry of the World. Meanwhile, in extolling the Modern Poet, the reader may not forget to offer his homage to by-gone names other than those already given—from Chaucer, Herrick, Crashaw, Wither, and Southwell, down to Cowper; and from Marvell, Drayton, Waller, Wotton, and Sir William Jones, even to Isaac Watts.

Yet it was William Blake who first peopled Poetry from the nurseries:

O what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London-town!
Seated in companies they sit, with radiance all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

Wild the rhymes may be, but the child-spirit had been caught at last and prisoned in Poetry. And who is the Child but the young brother of the Poet? The man of genius, says Ruskin, differs from the ordinary man, inasmuch as he goes through life with the wide-open eyes of a child. At last in Blake the man of genius frankly accepted his position, and did not dissemble his words.

The movement was a matter of time, however. The poet could not accustom himself to step into the nursery without stilts—still less to skip and to kneel in it.

Man's breathing miniature, thou mak'st me sigh,
moralised Coleridge over the babe; and now we sigh who read. Walter Savage Landor at least runs a race with a little girl, but, boor that he is, he does not allow her to win; and then, when he foregoes his victor's right of a kiss, he makes her complain to her mother—a potman's child rather than a Poet's:

Such modesty I never knew—
He would no more kiss me than you.

Even Charles Lamb forgot to be really the "frolic and the gentle" in his verses for the nursery; and Shelley ranted to his son. "Come with me, thou delightful child!" remains as the one memorable line,

amid pages of invocation to the infant to "fear not the tyrants will rule for ever." Tom Hood's

I'll tell you what, my love,
I cannot write unless he's sent above,

shall be forgiven, and worse than that, to the author of "The Death-bed." Beside "The Death-bed" I print Mr. Matthew Browne's "Flowers and Snow," Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse's "Bristol Boy," with both of which I made a first memorable meeting in magazines—and with these Mr. Gerald Massey's "Within a Mile of Edinburgh Town" comes to mind, for it too is full of tears. What modern England has achieved in this department, the most moving in all Letters, is seen by a comparison of any of these poems with Milton's "Fair Infant Dying of a Cough," in which he laments

But oh ! why didst thou not stay here below
To bless us with thy Heaven-loved innocence,
To slake His wrath whom sin hath made our foe ?

and, redeeming dulness for an instant, bids the mother

Think what a present thou to God hast sent.

On to Wordsworth went the magic of Blake. The child as "father of the man" became an object of the world's solicitude. His destiny, past, present and future, was declared to all. A being so descended, and with divine possibilities, could no longer be flouted or ignored. One Poet after another became his hierophant. Dante Rossetti, besides writing

"My Sister's Sleep," opens his sonnet, "Broken Music," with an allusion studied from the Child :

The mother will not turn, who thinks she hears
Her nurseling's speech first grow articulate ;
But breathless with averted eyes elate
She sits, with open lips and open ears,
That it may call her twice.

And when he seeks the origin of "Dante's love sublimed to Heavenly mood," exhibited in the "Vita Nuova" and

Marvelled touching his Beatitude,
How grew such presence from man's shameful swarm,

he finds in the Child the Teacher a solution of the mystery :

At length within this book I find pourtrayed
Newborn that Paradisal love of his,
And simple like a child ; with whose clear aid
I understood. To such a child as this,
Christ, charging well his chosen ones, forbade
Offence : "For lo ! of such my kingdom is."

George Meredith sees in the child a usurper, indeed ; but how seraphic a one is shown in the poem afterwards quoted.

Mr. Swinburne might not have been suspected of the tendency ; but the influence of Victor Hugo drew him also into the enchanted circle. He acknowledges the derivation by the title of his "*Étude Réaliste*," wherein he sings a Baby's feet, a Baby's hands and a Baby's eyes. "Like sea-shells pink"

he paints a Baby's feet, and it is the happiest touch,
as it ought to be, from this singer of the sea. More
than a mere daintiness of form, because embodying
a passage of child biography, is the same writer's
poem headed " A Child's Pity " :

No sweeter thing than children's ways and wiles,
Surely, we say, can gladden eyes and ears ;
Yet sometimes sweeter than their words or smiles
Are even their tears.

To one for once a piteous tale was read,
How, when the murderous mother crocodile
Was slain, her fierce brood famished, and lay dead,
Starved, by the Nile.

In vast green reed-beds on the vast grey slime
These monsters motionless and helpless lay,
Perishing only for the parent's crime
Whose seed were they.

Hours after, towards the dusk, one blithe small bird
Of Paradise, who has our hearts in keeping,
Was heard or seen, but hardly seen or heard,
For pity weeping.

He was so sorry, sitting still apart,
For the poor little crocodiles, he said.
Six years had given him, for an angel's heart,
A child's instead.

Feigned tears the false beasts shed for murderous ends,
We know from travellers' tales of crocodiles ;
But these tears wept upon them of my friend's
Outshine his smiles.

What heavenliest angels of what heavenly city
Could match the heavenly heart in children here ?
The heart that hallowing all things with its pity
Casts out all fear ?

The Child the Reconciler is given to us by the Poet Laureate. Walter Scott had devised the situation of the mother mourning her dead husband-warrior, consoled only by seeing in her son the future avenger. A gentler inspiration marks the passage of time, and Lord Tennyson gives it lyrical expression :

Home they brought her warrior dead ;
 She nor swooned nor uttered cry.
 All her maidens watching said,
 "She must weep or she will die."

* * * *

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
 Set his child upon her knee.
 Like summer tempest came her tears :
 "Sweet my child, I live for thee."

The Child, by the mere fact of living, here puts the widow upon terms with life ; and the Child, by the mere fact of being dead, reappears in the Laureate's loveliest lines to put husband and wife upon terms with each other—the Child is the Reconciler, alike in life and in death :

As through the land at eve we went
 And plucked the ripened ears,
 We fell out, my wife and I,
 We fell out, I know not why,
 And kissed again with tears.

* * * *

For when we came where lies the child
 We lost in other years,
 There above the little grave,
 O there above the little grave
 We kissed again with tears.

The Laureate leaves behind his lyric splendours when he goes into the "Children's Hospital," though one verse in it is a study from child-life. Emmie has overheard the doctor give her up, and she solves a problem of theology with the girl in the next cot :

"He says I shall never live through it; O Annie, what shall I do?"

Annie considered. "If I," said the wise little Annie, "was you,

I should cry to the dear Lord Jesus to help me, for Emmie, you see,

It's all in the picture there, 'Little children should come to Me:'"

(Meaning, the print that you gave us, I find that it always can please

Our children, the dear Lord Jesus with children about His knees).

"Yes, and I will," said Emmie, "but then if I call to the Lord,

How should he know that it's me? such a lot of beds in the ward!"

That was a puzzle for Annie. Again she consider'd and said—

"Emmie, you put out your arms, and you leave 'em outside on the bed—

The Lord has so *much* to see to! but, Emmie, you tell it Him plain,

It's the little girl with her arms lying out on the counter-pane."

* * * * *

He had brought his ghastly tools: we believed her asleep again—

Her dear, long, lean little arms lying out on the counter-pane.

To his grandson, Alfred Tennyson, the Laureate dedicates his "Ballads and Other Poems" :

O mine, and mine of mine,
Glorious poet who never hast written a line,
recalling Ben Jonson "On his First Son" :

Rest in soft peace, and, asked, say here doth lie
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.

Mr. Charles Tennyson-Turner's "Letty's Globe" will be found in its place, a perfect poem and a perfect allegory.

Mrs. Browning was the first among the poets to fulfil the ideal of the woman writing of the child. In her earlier poems she devoted to him a large space, as in "Isobel's Child." In her later poems there was more compression, and sometimes she contented herself with an allusion. By "Cowper's Grave" she sang :

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while
she blesses
And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her
kisses,
That turns his fevered eyes around, " My mother,
where's my mother?"
As if such tender words and deeds could come from
any other :

The fever gone, with leaps of heart, he sees her bend-
ing o'er him,
Her face all pale from watchful love, the unwearied
love she bore him :
Thus woke the poet from the dream his life-long
fever gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes which closed in
Death to save him.

In words as noble and moving she addresses a father and mother who have lost a child, and have remaining to them "only a curl" of the bright locks put away "out of reach beyond kiss in the clay."

"God lent him and takes him," you sigh
—Nay there let me break with your pain :
God's generous in giving, say I,
And the thing which he gives, I deny
That He ever can take back again.

He gives what He gives. I appeal
To all who bear babes—in the hour,
When the veil of the body we feel
Rent round us—while torments reveal
The motherhood's advent in power ;

And the babe cries ! has each of us known
By apocalypse (God being there
Full in nature) the child is our own :
Life of life, love of love, moan of moan,
Through all changes, all times, everywhere.

He's ours and for ever. Believe
O father ! O mother, look back
To the first love's assurance. To give
Means, with God, not to tempt or deceive
With a cup thrust in Benjamin's sack.

He gives what He gives. Be content !
He resumes nothing given—be sure !
God lend ? Where the usurers lent
In His temple, indignant He went
And scourged away all those impure.

In "Little Mattie" a girl's death is again the theme :

Just so young but yesternight,
Now she is as old as death.
Meek, obedient, in your sight,
Gentle to a beck or breath
Only on last Monday ! Yours,
Answering you like silver bells
Lightly touched ! An hour matures :
You can teach her nothing else.
She has seen the mystery hid
Under Egypt's pyramid :
By those eyelids pale and close
Now she knows what Rhamses knows.

* * * *

You, you had the right, you thought,
To survey her with sweet scorn,
Poor gay child, who had not caught
Yet the octave stretch forlorn
Of your larger wisdom ! Nay,
Now your places are changed so,
In the same superior way
She regards you dull and low,
As you did herself exempt
From life's sorrows. Grand contempt
Of the spirits risen awhile,
Who look back with such a smile !

There's the sting of't. That, I think,
Hurts the most a thousandfold.
To feel sudden, at a wink,
Some dear child we used to scold,
Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,
Teach and tumble as our own,
All its curls about our knees,
Rise up suddenly full grown.

Who could wonder such a sight,
Made a woman mad outright ?
Shew me Michael with the sword
Rather than such angels, Lord !

At "A Child's Grave at Florence," a babe's whose
life "by months, not years, was reckoned," the same
thoughts crowd in, and the Mother goes out to the
Mother :

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts
With spirit unbereaven.
"God will not take back his gifts ;
My Lily's mine in Heaven.
"Still mine !" maternal rights, serene,
Not given to another !
The crystal bars shine faint between
The souls of Child and Mother.
"Meanwhile " the mother cries, " Content !
Our love was well divided :
Its sweetness following where she went,
Its anguish stayed where I did.
"Well done of God, to halve the lot,
And give her all the sweetness ;
To us the empty room and Cot,
To her the Heaven's Completeness.
"To us this grave, to her the rows,
The mystic palm-trees spring in ;
To us, the silence in the house,
To her the choral singing."

So speaks the Mother. What of the Father ?
Mr. Coventry Patmore, as if to save the supremacies
he has maintained in theory, came to tell the world
what the Masculine mind can conceive of tenderness

for the Child. The poet who has invested Domesticity with its native and lapsed dignity, and has transformed dowdiness into distinction, he presents to us the Boy, the Explainer of God to man. A parent, touched by the sight of the trivial compensations his child takes in time of banishment, comprehends the Heavenly Father's attitude to his great family on earth, erring, and comforted by such trifles. The favour of Mr. Patmore enables me to give in *facsimile* the manuscript of "The Toys"—a poem, most poignant yet most supporting, which, more profoundly than any other, marks the literature of the age in which it was produced. It first appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of Mr. Greenwood's editing, signed by the initials "C. P." The association is worth recalling, for it was Mr. Greenwood himself who, years later, touched the heart of the town in a few lines of prose. I repeat from memory. A child is at its mother's door. "Is that you, darling?" she cries. "No mother, it's me," the child answers, not being the pet whom its mother would so address. There must be another world, says Mr. Greenwood, to redress the inequalities of this. Wherein we have again the Child as the argument for Immortality.

The heaven has spread. Take up a book by any typical modern poet and see the hold the Child has on him. If he does not actually write poems about Children which I can take for quotation, none the

less do I find that the Children beset his paths. He shows that they expound and elucidate Heaven and earth for him. At every difficult turn they are among the constant allusions of life, a population to be referred to and reckoned with. One such work is at my hand.

O Spring I know thee ! seek for sweet surprise
In the young children's eyes,

exclaims the writer, at the very opening, unable to elude the child. In a time of deprivation, the child remains as comforter and compensation :

Although my life is left so dim,
The morning crowns the mountain brim ;
Joy is not gone from summer skies,
Nor innocence from children's eyes ;
And all these things are part of him.

And there comes a new pity for "children in their lonely hour," since man feels that it answers to his own recurring sense of isolation : indeed, a new pity for them since it is perceived that they share the latent mysterious melancholy which invades all objects of beauty :

No, not sad ; we are beguiled,
Sad with living as we are ;
Ours the sorrow, outpouring
Sad self on a selfless thing,
As our eyes and hearts are mild
With our sympathy for spring,
With a pity sweet and wild
For the innocent and far,
With our sadness in a star
Or our sadness in a child.

Then we have the Child the Legislator—giving to the young bough the bend which will stay with the ancient trunk. Well may this Poet address her own childhood :

But how dare you use me so ? For you bring my ripe
years low
To your child's whim and a destiny your child soul could
not know.
And that small voice legislating I revolt against with
tears,
But you mark not through the years.

I rebel not, child gone by, but obey you wonderingly,
For you knew not, young rash speaker, all you spoke and
now will I,
With the life and all the loneliness revealed that you
thought fit,
Sing the Amen, knowing it.

And more says the Modern Poet to this young
Arbiter of fate. Nay, now we cannot kiss the
common child without a multitude of emotions,
knitting together the past, the present, the future :

So, child, I kiss you tall and changed
In that one kiss, and kiss you a man and old,
And so I kiss you dead.

And the Child as the final Model remains—where
Poet and Saint may unite to testify :

Failing in penitence, I who fail in all,
Leave all my thoughts alone, and lift mine eyes
Quietly to One who makes amends for me.
Less than I knew, less than I know, am I,
Returning Childless, but, O Father, a Child !

One of our younger Poets, Mr. Francis Thompson, who has eluded Fame as long as Shelley did, but cannot elude it longer, passes from the place of preparation to the place of fruition, and gives the clue to his own eternal whereabouts :

Look for me in the Nurseries of Heaven !

To most readers the poems of Mr. Francis Thompson given in this collection will come as the revelation of a new personality in Poetry, the last discovered of the Immortals.

It would not be poetical justice had the Nurse no share in the new glory given to her charge. Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson has placed her, with his own perfection, on a dedication page "To Alison Cunningham :"

For all the nights you lay awake,
And watched for my unworthy sake !
For your most comfortable hand
Which led me through the uneven land :
For all the story books you read :
For all the pains you comforted :
For all you pitied, all you bore,
In sad and happy days of yore :—
My second Mother, my first Wife,
The angel of my infant life—
From the sick child now well and old,
Take, nurse, the little book you hold !

And grant it, Heaven, that all who read,
May have as dear a nurse at need !

The watches of a mother by the bed of fever are made with magic in verses which Mr. Stevenson contributed to a friend's newspaper and which he called "The Sick Child."

CHILD.

O, mother, lay your hand on my brow !
O, mother, mother, where am I now ?
Why is the room so gaunt and great ?
Why am I lying awake so late ?

MOTHER.

Fear not at all ; the night is still,
Nothing is here that means you ill.
Nothing but lamps the whole town through,
And never a child awake but you.

CHILD.

Mother, mother, speak low in my ear,
Some of the things are so great and near,
Some are so small and far away,
I have a fear that I cannot say.
What have I done, and what do I fear,
And why are you crying, mother dear ?

MOTHER.

Out in the city sounds begin,
Thank the kind God, the carts come in !
An hour or two more, and God is so kind,
The day shall be blue on the window blind.
Then shall my child go sweetly asleep,
To dream of the birds and the hills of sheep.

So in the dream-beleaguered night,
While the other children lie
Quiet, and the stars are high,
The poor unused and playful mite
Lies strangling in the grasp of fright.

O, when all golden comes the day,
And the other children leap,
Singing, from the doors of sleep,
Lord, take Thy heavy hand away,
Lord, in Thy mercy, heal or slay !

Strange it is that Child-fear had waited to be so poignantly touched until it came under hand of a gay and buoyant singer. It is more appropriate than most things are in life that the author of these verses has had his own childhood sung as Mr. W. E. Henley sings it in the lines "To R. L. S." And is the nurse, to whom the child ran, the real Alison Cunningham? Happy nurse to be twice sung !

In his delightful "Garden of Verses," Mr. Stevenson shews us the man of genius devoting all his delicate art to the service of the nursery, so that, children's poems though they are, the grown-up lector delights in his lesson. Mr. Coventry Patmore made his selections for "The Children's Garland" on the basis of their doing double duty by being such as appeal to both youth and age, while Mr. Eric Robertson's "Children of the Poets" includes poems which remain in the world for young readers only. The breadth of these collections is the measure of the limitation of mine, for the poems of Childhood given here are not those that appeal to the Child, but those that appeal rather to the world on behalf of the Child. They may not mould the boy

or girl, but they will mould the Age, newly informed, in its attitude towards Infancy. The boy is proclaimed by the Poet as the last instructor. By him is human and Divine Truth taught. And in return for the lesson, the great company of Parents recognize in the Child an individuality once denied him, and devote to his separate career a tenderer care. It is fitting that the generation which limited the labour of little ones and was more moved than its predecessors to protect infancy against physical wrong, should be the age also in which Poets have proclaimed "the cloud of glory," in which the child comes "from God who is our Home." He comes as a King's messenger—the link between "the kindred points of Heaven and Home:" Heaven which can be entered by only those who become as little children, and the Home on earth which is his own creation.

In making these selections I have been bound—and very narrowly bound—by space; and I have kept this rule before me, that the worship of the Child should be fostered, directly or indirectly, in each poem published: at times by the divine right of the art devoted to the subject, and at times by the subjects treated in hands that looselier touch the lyre. And if this happy worship is increased in any reader, already devout, by what he makes or renews acquaintance with in this book, I shall regret the less the renunciations made in this narrowing of its bounds.

Half the poems copied in preparation have been put aside for one cause or another. The volume is not, therefore, in any sense a complete anthology ; yet he who has the spirit of what it contains needs no other sustenance or intuition, but has already entered the Paradise of the poet and the child.

PALACE COURT HOUSE,

LONDON, W.

MAY-DAY, 1892.





THE CHILD SET IN THE MIDST.

HOLY THURSDAY.



'TWAS on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces
clean,
Came children walking two and two, in red, and
blue, and green :
Grey-headed beadles walked before, with wands as
white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames
waters flow.

Oh what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of
London town !
Seated in companies they sit, with radiance all their
own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of
lambs,
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their inno-
cent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to Heaven the
voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of Heaven
among :
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of
the poor ;
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your
door.

William Blake.



INFANT SORROW.



MY mother groaned, my father wept :
Into the dangerous world I leapt,
Helpless, naked, piping loud,
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my swaddling-bands,
Bound and weary, I thought best
To sulk upon my mother's breast.

William Blake.



INTRODUCTION TO
"SONGS OF INNOCENCE."



P IPING down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me—
"Pipe a song about a lamb!"
So I piped with merry cheer.
"Piper, pipe that song again;"
So I piped: he wept to hear.
"Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy song of happy cheer!"
So I sang the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.
"Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read."
So he vanished from my sight;
And I plucked a hollow reed,
And I made a rural pen,
And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

William Blake.

THE LAND OF DREAMS.



A WAKE, awake, my little boy !
Thou wast thy mother's only joy.
Why dost thou weep in thy gentle sleep ?
Oh wake ! thy father doth thee keep.

" Oh what land is the land of dreams ?
What are its mountains and what are its streams ?
Oh father ! I saw my mother there,
Among the lilies by waters fair.

" Among the lambs clothed in white
She walked with her Thomas in sweet delight.
I wept for joy, like a dove I mourn—
Oh when shall I again return ? "

" Dear child ! I also by pleasant streams
Have wandered all night in the land of dreams ;
But, though calm and warm the waters wide,
I could not get to the other side."

" Father, O father ! what do we here,
In this land of unbelief and fear ?
The land of dreams is better far,
Above the light of the morning-star."

William Blake.

THE LITTLE BOY LOST.

“FATHER ! father ! where are you going ?
O, do not walk so fast.
Speak, father, speak to your little boy,
Or else I shall be lost.”

The night was dark, no father was there ;
The child was wet with dew ;
The mire was deep and the child did weep,
And away the vapour flew.

William Blake.



THE LITTLE BOY FOUND.



THE little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wandering light,
Began to cry ; but God, ever nigh,
Appear'd like his father in white :

He kiss'd the child, and by the hand led,
And to his mother brought,
Who, in sorrow pale, thro' the lonely dale,
Her little boy, weeping, sought.

William Blake.



A CRADLE SONG.

SWEET dreams, form a shade
O'er my lovely infant's head,
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams
By happy, silent, moony beams.

Sweet sleep with soft down
Weave thy brows an infant crown.
Sweet sleep, angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child.

Sleep, sleep, happy child ;
All creation slept and smiled.
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee thy mother weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Holy image I can trace.
Sweet babe, once like thee
Thy Maker lay and wept for me.

Wept for me, for thee, for all,
When He was an infant small.
Thou His image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee.

Smiles on thee, on me, on all ;
Who became an infant small.
Infant smiles are His own smiles ;
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.

William Blake.



INFANT JOY.



I HAVE no name—
I am but two days old.
What shall I call thee?
I happy am,
Joy is my name.—
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy but two days old.
Sweet joy I call thee,
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee!

William Blake.



ON ANOTHER'S SORROW.



CAN I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too ?
Can I see another's grief,
And not seek for kind relief ?

Can I see a falling tear,
And not feel my sorrow's share ?
Can a father see his child
Weep, nor be with sorrow fill'd ?

Can a mother sit and hear
An infant groan, an infant fear ?
No, no, never can it be,
Never, never can it be.

And can He who smiles on all
Hear the wren with sorrows small,
Hear the small bird's grief and care,
Hear the woes that infants bear,

And not sit beside the nest,
Pouring pity in their breast ;
And not sit the cradle near,
Weeping tear on infant's tear ;

And not sit both night and day,
Wiping all our tears away?
O ! no never can it be,
Never, never can it be.

He doth give His joy to all ;
He becomes an infant small ;
He becomes a man of woe ;
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh
And thy Maker is not by ;
Think not thou canst weep a tear
And thy Maker is not near.

Oh ! He gives to us His joy
That our grief He may destroy :
Till our grief is fled and gone
He doth sit by us and moan.

William Blake.



THE LAMB.



LITTLE lamb who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice;
Making all the vales rejoice;
Little lamb who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little lamb, I'll tell thee.
He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb:
He is meek and He is mild,
He became a little child.
I a child and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.

Little lamb, God bless thee,
Little lamb, God bless thee.

William Blake.

THREE YEARS SHE GREW.

THREE years she grew in sun and shower ;
Then Nature said, " A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown ;
This child I to myself will take ;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

" Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse : and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

" She shall be sportive as the fawn,
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs ;
And hers shall be the breathing balm
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her ; for her the willow bend ;
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

"The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her ; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place,
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

"And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell ;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—the work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run !
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm and quiet scene ;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

William Wordsworth.

LUCY GRAY; or, SOLITUDE.

OF T I had heard of Lucy Gray :
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day
The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew ;
She dwelt on a wild moor,
—The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door !

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green ;
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.

“To-night will be a stormy night—
You to the town must go ;
And take a lantern, child, to light
Your mother through the snow.”

“That, Father ! will I gladly do :
'Tis scarcely afternoon—
The minster clock has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon ! ”

At this the Father raised his hook,
And snapped a faggot band ;
He plied his work ;—and Lucy took
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe :
With many a wanton stroke
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time :
She wandered up and down ;
And many a hill did Lucy climb :
But never reached the town.

The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide ;
But there was neither sound nor sight
To serve them for a guide.

At day-break on a hill they stood
That overlooked the moor ;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
A furlong from their door.

They wept—and, turning homeward, cried,
“In heaven we all shall meet ;”
—When in the snow the mother spied
The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downwards from the steep hill's edge
They tracked the footmarks small ;
And through the broken hawthorn hedge,
And by the long stone wall ;

And then an open field they crossed :
The marks were still the same ;
They tracked them on, nor ever lost ;
And to the bridge they came.

They followed from the snowy bank
Those footmarks one by one,
Into the middle of the plank,
And further there were none !

—Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child ;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind ;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind.

William Wordsworth.



ODE :

*Intimations of Immortality
from Recollections of Early Childhood.*

‘The child is father of the man ;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.”

HERE was a time when meadow, grove, and
stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore,—
Turn wheresoe’er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose ;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare ;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair ;

The sunshine is a glorious birth ;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

Now while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief :
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong :

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep,
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong ;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay ;

Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday ;—
Thou child of joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
shepherd boy !

Ye blessed creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make ; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee ;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.

O evil day ! if I were sullen
While the earth herself is adorning,
 This sweet May morning ;
And the children are pulling,
 On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers ; while the sun shines warm,
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm :—
 I hear, I hear, with joy I hear !
 —But there's a tree, of many one,
A single field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone :
 The pansy at my feet
 Doth the same tale repeat :
Whither is fled the visionary gleam ?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream ?

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar ;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God, who is our home :
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing boy,

But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy ;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
 Must travel, still is nature's priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended ;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own ;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind.
And, even with something of a mother's mind,
 And no unworthy aim,
 The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.
Behold the child among his new-born blisses,
A six-years' darling of a pigmy size !
See where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes !
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learnèd art ;
 A wedding or a festival,
 A mourning or a funeral ;
 And this hath now his heart,

And unto this he frames his song :

Then will he fit his tongue

To dialogues of business, love, or strife ;

But it will not be long

Ere this be thrown aside,

And with new joy and pride

The little actor cons another part ;

Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"

With all the persons, down to palsied age,

That life brings with her in her equipage ;

As if his whole vocation

Were endless imitation.

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie

Thy soul's immensity ;

Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep

Thy heritage ; thou eye among the blind,

That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,

Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—

Mighty prophet ! seer blest !

On whom those truths do rest,

Which we are toiling all our lives to find,

In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave ;

Thou, over whom thy immortality

Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,

A presence which is not to be put by ;

Thou little child, yet glorious in the might

Of heaven-born freedom, on thy being's height,

Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life !

O joy ! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive !

The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction : not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest ;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast :

Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise ;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings ;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised :
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,

Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing ;
 Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence : truths that wake,

 To perish never ;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
 Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy !

 Hence, in a season of calm weather,
 Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
 Which brought us hither ;
 Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song !
 And let the young lambs bound
 As to the tabor's sound !
We in thought will join your throng,
 Ye that pipe and ye that play,
 Ye that through your hearts to-day
 Feel the gladness of the May !
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,

Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower ;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind,
In the primal sympathy
Which having been, must ever be ;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering ;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

And O ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
Think not of any severing of our loves !
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might :
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they ;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet ;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

William Wordsworth.

CHILDREN PLAYING IN A
CHURCHYARD.



CHILDREN, keep up that harmless play ;
Your kinder angels plainly say,
By God's authority, ye may.

Be prompt His holy word to hear,
It teaches you to banish fear :
The lesson lies on all sides near.

Ten summers hence the spriteliest lad,
In Nature's face will look more sad,
And ask where are those smiles she had.

Ere many days the last will close . . .
Play on, play on ; for then (who knows ?)
He who plays here may here repose.

Walter Savage Landor.



TO T. L. H.,
Six Years Old, during a Sickness.



SLEEP breathes at last from out thee,
My little, patient boy ;
And balmy rest about thee
Smooths off the day's annoy.
I sit me down, and think
Of all thy winning ways ;
Yet almost wish, with sudden shrink,
That I had less to praise.

Thy sidelong pillowed meekness,
Thy thanks to all that aid,
Thy heart, in pain and weakness,
Of fancied faults afraid ;
The little trembling hand
That wipes thy quiet tears,—
These, these are things that may demand
Dread memories for years.

Sorrows I've had, severe ones,
I will not think of now ;
And calmly, midst my dear ones,
Have wasted with dry brow ;
But when thy fingers press
And pat my stooping head,
I cannot bear the gentleness,—
The tears are in their bed.

Ah, first-born of thy mother,
When life and hope were new,
Kind playmate of thy brother,
Thy sister, father too ;
My light, where'er I go,
My bird, when prison-bound,
My hand in hand companion,—no,
My prayers shall hold thee round.

To say "He has departed"—
"His voice—his face—is gone ;"
To feel impatient-hearted,
Yet feel we must bear on ;
Ah ! I could not endure
To whisper of such woe,
Unless I felt this sleep ensure
That it will not be so.

Yes, still he's fixed and sleeping !
This silence too the while—
Its very hush and creeping
Seem whispering us a smile :
Something divine and dim
Seems going by one's ear,
Like parting wings of Cherubim,
Who say, " We've finished here."

Leigh Hunt.



THE DEATH BED.



WE watched her breathing through the night,
Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the tide of life
Kept heaving to and fro.

So silently we seemed to speak,
So slowly moved about,
As we had lent her half our powers
To eke her living out.

Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears our hopes belied—
We thought her dying when she slept
And sleeping when she died.

For when the morn came dim and sad,
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed—she had
Another morn than ours.

Thomas Hood.



THRENODY.



THE south-wind brings
Life, sunshine, and desire,
And on every mount and meadow
Breathes aromatic fire ;
But over the dead he has no power,
The lost, the lost, he cannot restore ;
And, looking over the hills, I mourn
The darling who shall not return.

I see my empty house,
I see my trees repair their boughs ;
And he, the wondrous child,
Whose silver warble wild
Outvalued every pulsing sound
Within the air's cerulean round—
The hyacinthine boy, for whom
Morn well might break and April bloom—
The gracious boy, who did adorn
The world whereinto he was born,
And by his countenance repay
The favour of the loving Day—
Has disappeared from the Day's eye ;
Far and wide she cannot find him ;
My hopes pursue, they cannot bind him.

Returned this day, the south-wind searches,
And finds young pines and budding birches ;
But finds not the budding man ;
Nature who lost, cannot remake him ;
Fate let him fall, Fate cannot retake him ;
Nature, Fate, men, him seek in vain.

And whither now, my truant wise and sweet,
O, whither tend thy feet ?
I had the right, few days ago,
Thy steps to watch, thy place to know ;
How have I forfeited the right ?
Hast thou forgot me in a new delight ?
I harken for thy household cheer,
O eloquent child !
Whose voice, an equal messenger,
Conveyed thy meaning mild.
What though the pains and joys
Whereof it spoke were toys
Fitting his age and ken,
Yet fairest dames and bearded men,
Who heard the sweet request,
So gentle, wise, and grave,
Bended with joy to his behest,
And let the world's affairs go by,
A while to share his cordial game,
Or mend his wicker waggon-frame,
Still plotting how their hungry ear
That winsome voice again might hear ;

For his lips could well pronounce
Words that were persuasions.

Gentlest guardians marked serene
His earthly hope, his liberal mien ;
Took counsel from his guiding eyes
To make this wisdom earthly wise.
Ah, vainly do these eyes recall
The school-march, each day's festival,
When every morn my bosom glowed
To watch the convoy on the road ;
The babe in willow waggon closed,
With rolling eyes and face composed ;
With children forward and behind,
Like Cupids studiously inclined ;
And he the chieftain paced beside,
The centre of the troop allied,
With sunny face of sweet repose,
To guard the babe from fancied foes.
The little captain innocent
Took the eye with him as he went ;
Each village senior paused to scan
And speak the lovely caravan.
From the window I look out
To mark thy beautiful parade,
Stately marching in cap and coat
To some tune by fairies played—
A music heard by thee alone

To works as noble led thee on.
Now Love and Pride, alas ! in vain,
Up and down their glances strain.
The painted sled stands where it stood ;
The kennel by the corded wood ;
His gathered sticks to staunch the wall
Of the snow-tower, when snow should fall :
The ominous hole he dug in the sand,
And childhood's castles built or planned ;
His daily haunts I well discern—
The poultry-yard, the shed, the barn—
And every inch of garden ground
Paced by the blessed feet around,
From the roadside to the brook
Whereinto he loved to look.
Step the meek birds where erst they ranged ;
The wintry garden lies unchanged ;
The brook into the stream runs on ;
But the deep-eyed boy is gone.

On that shaded day,
Dark with more clouds than tempests are,
When thou didst yield thy innocent breath
In bird-like heavings unto death,
Night came, and Nature had not thee ;
I said, " We are mates in misery."
The morrow dawned with needless glow :
Each snowbird chirped, each fowl must crow ;

Each tramper started, but the feet
Of the most beautiful and sweet
Of human youth hath left the hill
And garden—they were bound and still.
There's not a sparrow or a wren,
There's not a blade of autumn grain,
Which the four seasons do not tend,
And tides of life and increase end ;
And every chick of every bird,
And weed and rock-moss is preferred.

O ostrich-like forgetfulness !
O loss of larger in the less !
Was there no star that could be sent,
No watcher in the firmament,
No angel from the countless host
That loiters round the crystal coast,
Could stoop to heal that only child,
Nature's sweet marvel undefiled,
And keep the blossom of the earth,
Which all her harvests were not worth ?
Not mine—I never called thee mine,
But Nature's heir—if I repine,
And seeing rashly torn and moved
Not what I made, but what I loved,
Grow early old with grief that thou
Must to the wastes of Nature go—
'Tis because a general hope
Was quenched, and all must doubt and grope.

For flattering planets seemed to say
This child should ill of ages stay,
By wondrous tongue, and guided pen,
Bring the flown Muses back to men.
Perchance not he but Nature ailed ;
The world, and not the infant failed.
It was not ripe yet to sustain
A genius of so fine a strain,
Who gazed upon the sun and moon
As if he came unto his own,
And, pregnant with his grander thought,
Brought the old order into doubt.
His beauty once their beauty tried ;
They could not feed him, and he died,
And wandered backward as in scorn,
To wait an æon to be born.
Ill day which made this beauty waste,
Plight broken, this high face defaced !
Some went and came about the dead ;
And some in books of solace read ;
Some to their friends the tidings say ;
Some went to write, some went to pray ;
One tarried here, there hurried one ;
But their heart abode with none.
Covetous death bereaved us all,
To aggrandise one funeral.
The eager fate which carried thee
Took the largest part of me ;

For this losing is true dying ;
This is lordly man's down-lying,
This is slow but sure reclining,
Star by star his world resigning.
O child of paradise !
Boy who made dear his father's home,
In whose deep eyes
Men read the welfare of the times to come,
I am too much bereft.
The world dishonoured thou hast left.
O truth's and Nature's costly lie !
O trusted broken prophecy !
O richest fortune sourly crossed !
Born for the future, to the future lost !

The deep Heart answered, " Weepest thou ?
Worthier cause for passion wild
If I had not taken the child.
And deemest thou as those who pore,
With aged eyes, short way before—
Think'st Beauty vanished from the coast
Of Matter, and thy darling lost ?
Taught he not thee—the Man of eld,
Whose eyes within his eyes beheld
Heaven's numerous hierarchy span
The mystic gulf from God to man ?
To be alone wilt thou begin
When worlds of lovers hem thee in ?

To-morrow when the masks shall fall
That dizen Nature's carnival,
The pure shall see by their own will,
Which overflowing Love shall fill,
'Tis not within the force of fate
The fate-conjoined to separate.
But thou, my votary, weepest thou ?
I gave thee sight—where is it now ?
I taught thy heart beyond the reach
Of ritual, bible, or of speech ;
Wrote in thy mind's transparent table,
As far as the communicable ;
Taught thee each private sign to raise,
Lit by the supersolar blaze.
Past utterance, and past belief,
And past the blasphemy of grief,
The mysteries of Nature's art ;
And though no Muse can these impart,
Throb thine with Nature's throbbing breast,
And all is clear from east to west.

“I came to thee as to a friend ;
Dearest, to thee I did not send
Tutors, but a joyful eye,
Innocence that matched the sky,
Lovely locks, a form of wonder,
Laughter rich as woodland thunder,
That thou might'st entertain apart
The richest flowering of all art :

And, as the great all-loving Day
Through smallest chambers takes its way,
That thou might'st break thy daily bread
With prophet, Saviour, and head ;
That thou might'st cherish for thine own
The riches of sweet Mary's Son,
Boy-Rabbi, Israel's paragon.
And thoughtest thou such guest
Would in thy hall take up his rest ?
Would rushing life forget her laws,
Fate's glowing revolution pause ?
High omens ask diviner guess ;
Not to be conned to tediousness.
And know my higher gifts unbind
The zone that girds the incarnate mind.
When the scanty shores are full
With Thought's perilous, whirling pool ;
When frail Nature can no more,
Then the Spirit strikes the hour :
My servant Death, with solving rite,
Pours finite into infinite.

“ Wilt thou freeze love's tidal flow,
Whose streams through Nature circling go ?
Nail the wild star to its track
On the half-climbed zodiac ?
Light is light which radiates,
Blood is blood which circulates,

Life is life which generates,
And many-seeming life is one—
Wilt thou transfix and make it none ?
Its onward force too starkly pent
In figure, bone, and lineament ?
Wilt thou, uncalled, interrogate,
Talker ! the unreplying Fate ?
Nor see the genius of the whole
Ascendant in the private soul,
Beckon it when to go and come,
Self-announced its hour of doom ?
Fair the soul's recess and shrine,
Magic-built to last a season ;
Masterpiece of love benign ;
Fairer that expansive reason,
Whose omen 'tis and sign.
Wilt thou not ope thy heart to know
What rainbows teach, and sunsets show ?
Verdict which accumulates
From lengthening scroll of human fates,
Voice of earth to earth returned,
Prayers of saints that inly burned—
Saying, *What is excellent,*
As God lives, is permanent ;
Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain ;
Heart's love will meet thee again.
Revere the Maker ; fetch thine eye
Up to his style, and manners of the sky.

Not of adamant and gold
Built He heaven stark and cold ;
No, but a nest of bending reeds,
Flowering grass, and scented weeds ;
Or like a traveller's fleeting tent,
Or bow above the tempest bent ;
Built of tears and sacred flames,
And virtue reaching to its aims ;
Built of furtherance and pursuing,
Not of spent deeds, but of doing.
Silent rushes the swift Lord
Through ruined systems still restored,
Broad-sowing, bleak and void to bless,
Plants with worlds the wilderness ;
Waters with tears of ancient sorrow
Apples of Eden ripe to-morrow.
House and tenant go to ground,
Lost in God, in Godhead found."

Ralph Waldo Emerson.



THE
REAPER AND THE FLOWERS.



THERE is a Reaper, whose name is Death,
And, with his sickle keen,
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
And the flowers that grow between.

"Shall I have nought that is fair," saith he ;
"Have nought but the bearded grain ?
Though the breath of these flowers is sweet to me,
I will give them all back again."

He gazed at the flowers with tearful eyes,
He kissed their drooping leaves ;
It was for the Lord of Paradise
He bound them in his sheaves.

"My Lord has need of these flowerets gay,"
The Reaper said, and smiled ;
"Dear tokens of the earth are they,
Where He was once a child.

"They shall all bloom in fields of light,
Transplanted by my care,
And saints, upon their garments white,
These sacred blossoms wear."

And the mother gave, in tears and pain,
The flowers she most did love ;
She knew she should find them all again
In the fields of light above.

Oh, not in cruelty, not in wrath,
The Reaper came that day ;
'Twas an angel visited the green earth,
And took the flowers away.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.



THE CHANGELING.

I HAD a little daughter,
And she was given to me
To lead me gently backward
To the Heavenly Father's knee,
That I, by the force of nature,
Might in some dim wise divine
The depth of His infinite patience
To this wayward soul of mine.

I know not how others saw her,
But to me she was wholly fair,
And the light of the heaven she came from
Still lingered and gleamed in her hair;
For it was as wavy and golden,
And as many changes took
As the shadows of sun-gilt ripples
On the yellow bed of a brook.

To what can I liken her smiling
Upon me, her kneeling lover,
How it leaped from her lips to her eyelids,
And dimpled her wholly over,
Till her outstretched hands smiled also,
And I almost seemed to see
The very heart of her mother
Sending sun through her veins to me !

She had been with us scarce a twelvemonth,
And it hardly seemed a day,
When a troop of wandering angels
Stole my little daughter away ;
Or perhaps those heavenly Zingari
But loosed the hampering strings,
And when they had opened her cage-door,
My little bird used her wings.

But they left in her stead a changeling,
A little angel child,
That seems like a bud in full blossom,
And smiles as she never smiled :
When I wake in the morning, I see it
Where she always used to lie,
And I feel as weak as a violet
Alone 'neath the awful sky ;

As weak, yet as trustful also ;
For the whole year long I see
All the wonders of faithful Nature
Still worked for the love of me ;
Winds wander, and dews drip earthward,
Rain falls, suns rise and set,
Earth whirls, and all but to prosper
A poor little violet.

This child is not mine as the first was,
I cannot sing it to rest,
I cannot lift it up fatherly
And bless it upon my breast ;
Yet it lies in my little one's cradle
And sits in my little one's chair,
And the light of the heaven she's gone to
Transfigures its golden hair.

James Russell Lowell.



THE FIRST SNOW-FALL.

THE snow had begun in the gloaming,
And busily all the night
Had been heaping field and highway
With a silence deep and white.

Every pine and fir and hemlock
Wore ermine too dear for an earl,
And the poorest twig on the elm-tree
Was ridged inch-deep with pearl.

From sheds new-roofed with Carrara
Came Chanticleer's muffled crow,
The stiff rails were softened to swans'-down,
And still fluttered down the snow.

I stood and watched by the window
The noiseless work of the sky,
And the sudden flurries of snow-birds,
Like brown leaves whirling by.

I thought of a mound in sweet Auburn,
Where a little headstone stood ;
How the flakes were folding it gently,
As did robins the babes in the wood.

Up spoke our own little Mabel,
Saying, "Father, who makes it snow?"
And I told of the good All-father
Who cares for us here below.

Again I looked at the snow-fall,
And thought of the leaden sky
That arched o'er our first great sorrow,
When that mound was heaped so high.

I remembered the gradual patience
That fell from that cloud like snow,
Flake by flake, healing and hiding
The scar of our deep-plunged woe.

And again to the child I whispered,
"The snow that husheth all,
Darling, the merciful Father
Alone can make it fall!"

Then, with eyes that saw not, I kissed her;
And she kissing back could not know
That *my* kiss was given to her sister,
Folded close under deepening snow.

James Russell Lowell.



LETTY'S GLOBE.

WHEN Letty had scarce passed her third glad year,
And her young artless words began to flow,
One day we gave the child a coloured sphere
Of the wide earth, that she might mark and know,
By tint and outline, all its sea and land.
She patted all the world ; old empires peep'd
Between her baby-fingers ; her soft hand
Was welcome at all frontiers. How she leaped
And laughed and prattled in her world-wide bliss !
But when we turned her sweet unlearned eye
On our own isle, she raised a joyous cry—
“ Oh, yes ! I see it : Letty's home is there ! ”
And while she hid all England with a kiss,
Bright over Europe fell her golden hair.

Charles Tennyson-Turner.



A CHILD ASLEEP.



HOW he sleepeth, having drunken
Weary childhood's mandragore !

From his pretty eyes have sunken .

Pleasures to make room for more.

Sleeping near the withered nosegay which he plucked
the day before.

Nosegays ! leave them for the waking,

Throw them earthward where they grew.

Dim are such beside the breaking

Amaranths he looks into.

Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden

From the palms they sprang beneath,

Now perhaps divinely holden,

Swing against him in a wreath.

We may think so from the quickening of his bloom
and of his breath.

Vision unto vision calleth,
While the young child dreameth on.
Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
With the glory thou hast won!
Darker wert thou in the garden, yesternorn by summer sun.

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee—were the clouds away.
'Tis the child-heart draws them singing
In the silent-seeming clay.
Singing!—stars that seem the mutest go in music
all the way.

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapour,
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood, as if drinking its repose.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
Flash their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen thee,
While thou smilest, not in sooth
Thy smile, but the over-fair one, dropt from some
etherial mouth.

Haply it is angels' duty,
During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down this childish beauty
To the thing it must be made,
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall
see it fade.

Softly, softly ! make no noises !
Now he lieth dead and dumb,
Now he hears the angels' voices
Folding silence in the room.
Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words
as they come.

Speak not ! he is consecrated.
Breathe not breath across his eyes.
Lifted up and separated
On the hand of God he lies,
In a sweetness beyond touching — held in cloistral
sanctities.

Could ye bless him—father—mother,
Bless the dimple in his cheek ?
Dare ye look at one another
And the benediction speak ?
Would ye not break out in weeping and confess
yourselves too weak ?

He is harmless—ye are sinful.
Ye are troubled—he at ease.
From his slumber, virtue winful
Floweth outward with increase.
Dare not bless him ! but be blessèd by his peace—and
go in peace.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.



THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.



DO ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years ?
They are leaning their young heads against
their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly !
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in their sorrow,
Why their tears are falling so ?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in long ago.
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending with the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,

The old hope is hardest to be lost.
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are dread to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy.
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary ;
Our young feet," they say, "are very weak !
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek.
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children ;
For the outside earth is cold ;
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.

"True," say the children, "it may happen
That we die before our time.
Little Alice died last year—her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her.
Was no room for any work in the close clay !
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice, it is day.'

If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries.
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes.
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime !
It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children ! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have.
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from a grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do.
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through !
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds a-near the mine ?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine !

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary
And we cannot run or leap.
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go ;

And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burdens tiring
Through the coal-dark, underground—
Or all day we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

“For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning—
Their wind comes in our faces—
Till our hearts turn—our head, with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places.
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray,
‘O ye wheels’ (breaking out in mad moaning),
‘Stop! be silent for to-day!’”

Ay! be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!
Let them touch each other’s hand in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals.
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!—

Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark ;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray ;
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, " Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheel is stirred ?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us,
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door.
Is it likely God, with angels singing round him,
Hears our weeping any more ?

" Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And at midnight's hour of harm,
' Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.
We know no other words, except ' Our Father,'
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand, which is strong.
' Our Father !' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)

Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But no!" say the children, weeping faster,
"He is speechless as a stone.
And they tell us of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children—"up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving—
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run.
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory,
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man without his wisdom;
They sink in man's despair without its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm—
Are worn, as if with age, yet unretreivngly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity !
“ How long,” they say, “ how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child’s heart—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart ?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And its purple shows your path !
But the child’s sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.”

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.



A PORTRAIT.

| WILL paint her as I see her ;
| Ten times have the lilies blown
| Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear,
Lily-shaped and dropped in duty
To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encoloured faintly,
Which a taint of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air.

And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and tender
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child—simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient,—waiting still
On the turning of your will.

Throwing light, as all young things,
As young birds, or early wheat,
When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures, for the rest,
Which come softly—just as she
When she settles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks—
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more fair
Then our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her
He would sing of her with falls
Used in loving madrigals.

And if any painter drew her
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round the hair.

And if reader read the poem,
He would whisper, "You have done a
Consecrated little Una."

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
"'Tis my angel with a name !"

And a stranger when he sees her
In the street even—smileth stilly
Just as you would at a lily.

And all voices that address her
Softens, sleeken every word,
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth whereon she passes,
With the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray "God love her !"—
Ay, and always in good sooth,
We may all be sure HE DOETH.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

*THE ROMANCE OF THE
SWAN'S NEST.*



LITTLE Ellie sits alone
'Mid the beeches of a meadow
By a stream-side on the grass,
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow
On her shining hair and face.

She has thrown her bonnet by,
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow :
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands all sleek and dripping
While she rocketh too and fro.

Little Ellie sits alone,
And the smile she softly uses
Fills the silence like a speech
While she thinks what shall be done,
And the sweetest pleasure chooses
For her future within reach.

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooses—"I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds :
He shall love me without guile,
And to him I will discover
The swan's nest among the reeds.

"And the steed shall be red-roan,
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the breath :
And the lute he plays upon
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

"And the steed it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure,
And the mane shall swim the wind ;
And the hoofs along the sod
Shall flash onward and keep measure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

"But my lover shall not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face :
He will say, 'O Love thine eyes
Build the shrine my soul abides in,
And I kneel here for thy grace !'

“ Then, ay, then he shall kneel low,
With the red-roan steed anear him
Which shall seem to understand,
Till I answer, ‘ Rise and go !
For the world must love and fear him
Whom I gift with heart and hand.’

“ Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a *yes* I must not say ;
Nathless Maiden-brave, ‘ Farewell,’
I will utter and dissemble—
‘ Light to-morrow with to-day !’

“ Then he’ll ride among the hills
To the wide world past the river
There to put away all wrong ;
To make straight distorted wills,
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

“ Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream and climb the mountain
And kneel down beside my feet—
‘ Lo, my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity’s counting !
What wilt thou exchange for it ?’

“ And the first time I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon,
And the second time a glove ;
But the third time I may bend
From my pride, and answer—‘ Pardon,
If he comes to take my love.’

“ Then the young foot-page will run,
Then my lover will run faster,
Till he kneeleth at my knee :
‘ I am a duke’s eldest son,
Thousand serfs do call me master,
But, O Love, I love but *thee* !’

“ He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover
Through the crowds that praise his deeds :
And when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto *him* I will discover
That swan’s nest among the reeds.”

Little Ellie with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,
And went homeward round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the two.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
Winding up the stream light-hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads,
Past the bough she stoops—and stops.
Lo, the wild swan had deserted,
And a rat had gnawed the reeds !

Ellie went home sad and slow.
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds
Sooth I know not ; but I know
She could never show him—never
That swan's nest among the reeds !

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.



ISOBEL'S CHILD.



—So find we profit,
By losing of our prayers.—*Shakspeare.*

TO rest the weary nurse had gone,
An eighth day watch had watchèd she,
Still rocking beneath sun and moon
The baby on her knee,
Till Isobel its mother said
“The fever waneth—wend to bed
For now the watch comes round to me.”

Then wearily the nurse did throw
Her pallet in the darkest place
Of that sick room and slept and dreamed.
For as the gusty wind did blow
The night lamps' flare across her face .
She saw, or seemed to see, but dreamed,
That the poplars tall on the opposite hill,
Did clasp the setting sun until
His rays dropped from him, pined and still
As blossoms in frost !
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly crossed,

To the colour of moonlight which doth pass
Over the dark ridged Churchyard grass.
The poplars held the sun and he
The eyes of the nurse that she should not see
Not for a moment, the babe on her knee,
Though she shuddered to feel that it grew to be
Too chill, and lay too heavily.

She only dreamed, for all the while
'Twas lady Isobel that kept
The little baby—and it slept
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,
Laden with love's dewy weight,
And red as rose of Harpocrate
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed
Lashes to cheek in a sealèd rest.
And more and more smiled Isobel

To see the baby sleep so well—

She knew not that she smiled.
Against the lattice dull and wild
Drive the heavy droning drops,
Drop by drop, the sound being one—
As momentarily time's segments fall
On the ear of God, who hears through all

Eternity's unbroken monotone.

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—

She knew not that she smiled.

The wind in intermission stops
Down in the beechen forest,
 Then cries aloud
 Self-stung, self-driven,
And rises up to its very tops,
Stiffening erect the branches bowed,
Dilating with the tempest-soul
The trees that with their dark hands break
Through their own outline and heavily roll
 Shadows as massive as clouds in heaven,
 Across the Castle lake.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well ;
She knew not that she smiled ;
She knew not that the storm was wild,
Through the uproar drear she could not hear
The Castle clock which struck anear—
She heard the low, light breathing of her child.

O sight for wondering look !
While the eternal nature broke
Into such abandonment,
While the very mist heart-rent
By the lightning, seemed to eddy
Against nature with a din,
A sense of silence and of steady
Natural calm appeared to come
From things without, and enter in
 The human creature's room.

So motionless she sat,
The babe asleep upon her knees,
You might have dreamed their souls had gone
Away to things inanimate,
In such to live, in such to moan ;
And that their bodies had ta'en back,
In mystic change, all silences
That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
Or dwell beneath the reedy ground
In waters safe from their own sound.

Only she wore
The deepening smile I named before,
And *that* a deepening love expressed ;
And who at once can love and rest ?

In sooth the smile that then was keeping
Watch upon the baby sleeping,
Floated with its tender light
Downward, from the drooping eyes,
Upwards from the lips apart,
Over cheeks which had grown white
With an eighth day weeping.

All smiles come in such a wise,
Where tears shall fall or have of old—
Like Northern lights that fill the heart
Of heaven in sign of cold.

Motionless she sat.
Her hair had fallen by its weight
On each side of her smile, and lay
Very blackly on the arm
Where the baby nestled warm,
Pale as baby carved in stone
Seen by glimpses of the moon
Up a dark Cathedral aisle.
But, through the storm, no moonbeam fell
Upon the child of Isobel—
Perhaps you saw it by the ray
Alone of her still smile.

A solemn thing it is to me
To look upon a babe that sleeps ;
Wearing in its spirit deeps
The undeveloped mystery
Of our Adam's taint and woe,
Which, when they developed be,
Will not let it slumber so !
Lying now in life beneath
The shadow of the coming death,
With that soft, low, quiet breath,
As if it felt the sun !
Knowing all things by their blooms,
Not their roots, yea, sun and sky,
Only by their warmth that comes
Out of each—earth only by

The pleasant hues that o'er it run—
And human love, by drops of sweet
White nourishment still hanging round
The little mouth so slumber-bound.
All which broken sentiency
And conclusion incomplete,
Will gather and unite and climb
To an immortality
Good or evil each sublime
Through life and death to life again.
O little lids now folded fast,
Must ye learn to drop at last
Our large and burning tears?
O warm quick body must thou lie,
When the time comes round to die,
Still, from all the whirl of years,
Ban of all the joy and pain?
O small frail being, wilt thou stand
 At God's right hand,
Lifting up those sleeping eyes
Dilated by great destinies,
To an endless waking? thrones and seraphim,
Through the long ranks of their solemnities,
Sunning thee with calm looks of Heaven's surprise,
 But thine alone on Him?—
Or else, self-willed to tread the godless place,
(God keep thy will) feel thine own energies
Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead man's clasp,

The sleepless, deathless life within thee, grasp—
While myriad faces, like one changeless face,
With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee everywhere,
And overcome thee with thine own despair ?

More soft, less solemn images

Drifted o'er the lady's heart,

Silently as snow.

She had seen eight days depart

Hour by hour, on bended knees,

With pale-wrung hands and praying low

And broken, through which came the sound

Of tears that fell against the ground,

Making sad stops :—" Dear Lord, dear Lord ! "

She still had prayed, (the heavenly word,

Broken by an earthly sigh)

—" Thou Who didst not erst deny

The mother-joy to Mary mild,

Blessèd in the blessèd Child,

Which harkened in meek babyhood

Her cradle-hymn, albeit used

To all that music interfused

In breasts of Angels high and good !

Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—

Oh, take not to Thy songful heaven,

The pretty baby Thou hast given,

Or ere that I have seen him play

Around his father's knees and known

That *he* knew how my love has gone
From all the world to him.
Think, God, among the Cherubim,
How I shall shiver every day
In Thy June sunshine, knowing where
The grave-grass keeps it from his fair,
Still cheeks ! and feel at every tread
His little body which is dead
And hidden in the turfy fold,
Doth make Thy whole warm earth a-cold !
O God, I am so young, so young—
I am not used to tears at nights
Instead of slumber—nor to prayer
With sobbing lips and hands out-wrung !
Thou knowest all my prayings were
‘ I bless Thee, God, for past delights—
Thank God ! ’ I am not used to bear
Hard thoughts of death, the earth doth cover
No face from me of friend or lover.
And must the first who teaches me
The form of shrouds and funerals, be
Mine own first-born beloved ? he
Who taught me first this Mother-love ?
Dear Lord, Who spreadest out above
Thy loving transpierced Hands to meet
All lifted hearts with blessings sweet—
Pierce not my heart, my tender heart,
Thou madest tender ! Thou Who art

So happy in Thy heaven alway !
Take not my only bliss away !”
She so had prayed : and God Who hears
Through seraph-songs the sound of tears,
From that belovèd babe had ta'en
The fever and the beating pain.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well,
(She knew not that she smiled I wis)
Until the pleasant gradual thought
Which near her heart her smile enwrought,
Now soft and slow, itself did seem
To flock along a happy dream,
Beyond it into speech like this.

“ I prayed for thee, my little child,
And God has heard my prayer !
And when thy babyhood is gone,
We two together undefiled
By men's repinings, will kneel down
Upon his earth which will be fair
(Not covering thee, sweet) to us twain,
And give him thankful praise.”

Dully and wildly drives the rain,
Against the lattices drives the rain.

“ I thank Him now that I can think
Of those same future days,

Nor from the harmless image shrink
Of what I there might see—
Strange babies on their mothers' knee,
Whose innocent soft faces might
From off mine eyelids strike the light,
With looks not meant for me ! ” .

Gustily blows the wind through the rain,
As against the lattices drives the rain.

“ But now, O baby mine, together,
We turn this hope of ours again
To many an hour of summer weather,
When we shall sit and entwine
Our spirits, and instruct each other
In the pure loves of child and mother !
Two human loves make one divine.”

The thunder tears through the wind and the rain,
As full on the lattices drives the rain.

“ My little child, what wilt thou choose ?
Now let me look at thee and ponder.
What gladness from the gladnesses
Futurity is spreading under
Thy gladsome sight ? Beneath the trees
Wilt thou lean all day and lose
Thy spirit with the river seen
Intermittently between

The winding beechen alleys—
Half in labour, half repose,
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,
Thou with only thoughts to keep
Which never a bound will overpass,
And which are innocent as those
That feed among Arcadian Valleys
Upon the dewy grass ? ”

The large white owl that with age is blind,
That has sat for years in the old tree hollow,
Is carried away in a gust of wind !
His wings could bear him not as fast
As he goeth now the lattice past—
He is borne by the winds ; the rains do follow :
His white wings to the blast out-flowing,
He hooteth in going.
And still, in the lightnings, coldly glitter
His round unblinking eyes.

“ Oh, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
To be eloquent and wise—
One upon whose lips the air
Turns to solemn verities,
For men to breathe anew and win
A deeper-seated life within ?
Wilt be a philosopher,
By whose voice the earth and skies

Shall speak to the unborn?
Or a poet, broadly spreading
The golden immortalities
Of thy soul on natures lorn
And poor of such, them all to guard
From their decay—beneath thy treading,
Earth's flowers recovering hues of Eden—
And stars drawn downward by thy looks
To shine ascendant in thy books?"

The tame hawk in the Castle yard,
How it screams to the lightning, with its wet
Jagged plumes o'er-hanging the parapet:
And at the lady's door the hound
Scratches with a crying sound.

"But,—O my babe, thy lids are laid
Close fast upon thy cheek—
And not a dream of power and sheen
Can make a passage up between;
Thy heart is of thy mother's made,
Thy looks are very meek.

"And it will be their chosen place
To rest on some beloved face,
As these on thine—and let the noise
Of the whole world go on, nor drown
The tender silence of thy joys!

Or when that silence shall have grown
Too tender for itself, the same
Yearning for sound to look above
And utter its one meaning, LOVE,
That *He* may hear His Name !”

No wind, no rain, no thunder !
The waters had trickled not slowly
The thunder was not spent,
Nor the wind near finishing.
Who would have said that the storm was dimin-
ishing ?

No wind, no rain, no thunder !
Their noises dropped asunder
From the earth and the firmament,
From the towers and the lattices,
Abrupt and echoless
As ripe fruits on the ground unshaken wholly—
As life in death !
And sudden and solemn the silence fell,
Startling the heart of Isobel
As the tempest could not.
Against the door went panting the breath
Of the lady's hound whose cry was still,
And she, constrained howe'er she would not,
Lifted her eyes and saw the moon
Looking out of heaven alone
Upon the poplared hill—

A calm of God made visible
That men might bless it at their will.
The moonshine on the baby's face
Falleth clear and cold.
The mother's looks have fallen back
To the same place ;
Because no moon with silver rack,
Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies
Has power to hold
Our loving eyes,
Which still revert, as ever must
Wonder and Hope, to gaze upon the dust.

The moonshine on the baby's face
Cold and clear remaineth.
The mother's looks do shrink away—
The mother's looks return to stay,
As charmèd by what paineth.
Is any glamour in the case ?
Is it dream or is it sight ?
Hath the change upon the wild
Elements, that signs the night,
Passed upon the child ?
It is not dream but sight !

The babe has awakened from sleep,
And unto the gaze of its mother
Bent over it, lifted another !

Not the baby-looks that go
Unaimingly to and fro,
But an earnest gazing deep,
Such as soul gives soul at length,
When, by work and wail of years,
It winneth a solemn strength,

And mourneth as it wears.

A strong man could not brook
With pulse unhurried by fears,
To meet that baby's look
O'erglazed by manhood's tears—
The tears of a man full grown,
With a power to wring our own,
In the eyes all undefiled

Of a little three months' child !

To see that babe-brow wrought
By the witnessing of thought,
To judgment's prodigy !

And small soft mouth unweaned,

By mother's kiss o'erleaned,

(Putting the sound of loving

Where no sound else was moving

Except the speechless cry)

Quickened to mind's expression,

Shaped to articulation,

Yea, uttering words—yea, naming woe,

In tones that with it strangely went,

Because so baby-innocent,

As the child spake out the mother so.—

“O Mother, mother, loose thy prayer !
Christ’s name hath made it strong.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me,
With its most loving cruelty,
From floating my new soul along
The happy heavenly air.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me !
Mine angel looketh sorrowful
Upon the face of God.

“Mother, mother, can I dream
Beneath your earthly trees ?
I had a vision and a gleam—
I heard a sound more sweet than these
When rippled by the wind.
Did you see the Dove with wings
Bathed in golden glisterings
From a sunless light behind,
Dropping on me from the sky
Soft as a mother’s kiss, until
I seemed to leap, and yet was still ?
Saw you how His love-large eye
Looked upon me mystic calms,
Till the power of His divine
Vision was indrawn to mine ?

“Oh, the dream within the dream !
I saw celestial places even.

Oh, the vistas of high palms,
Making finites of delight
Through the heavenly infinite—
Lifting up their green still tops
To the Heaven of Heaven!

Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops
Shade like light across the river,
Glorified in its for ever

Flowing from the Throne!
Oh, the shining holinesses
Of the thousand, thousand faces
God-sunned by the thronèd ONE!
And made intense with such a love,
That though I saw them turned above,
Each loving seemed for also me!
And, oh, the Unspeakable, the HE,
The manifest in secrecies,
Yet of mine own heart partaker—
With the overcoming look
Of One Who had been once forsook,
And blessèd the forsaker.

Mother, mother, let me go
Toward the face that looketh so
Through the mystic wingèd Four
Whose are inward outward eyes
Dark with life of mysteries,
And the restless evermore
'Holy, holy, holy,'—through

The sevenfold Lamps that burn in view
Of cherubim and seraphim—
Through the four-and-twenty crowned
Stately elders, white around,
Suffer me to go to Him !

“ Is your wisdom very wise,
Mother, on the narrow earth,
Very happy, very worth
That I should stay to learn ?
Are these air-corrupting sighs
Fashioned by unlearnèd breath ?
Do the students' lamps that burn
All night, illumine death ?
Mother, albeit this be so,
Loose thy prayer and let me go
Where that bright chief angel stands
Apart from all his brother bands,
Too glad for smiling, having bent
In angelic bewilderment
O'er the depths of God, and brought
Reeling thence, one only thought
To fill his whole eternity.
He the teacher is for me !—
He can teach what I would know—
Mother, mother, let me go !

“ Can your poet make an Eden
No winter will undo,
And light a starry fire while heeding
His hearth’s is burning too ?
Drown in music the earth’s din,
And keep his own wild soul within
The law of his own harmony ?—
Mother, albeit this be so,
Let me to my Heaven go !
A little harp me waits thereby—
A harp whose strings are golden all,
And turned to music spherical,
Hanging on the green life-tree
Where no willows ever be.
Shall I miss that harp of mine ?
Mother, no !—the Eye divine
Turned upon it makes it shine ;
And when I touch it, poems sweet
Like separate souls shall fly from it,
Each to our immortal fytte.
We shall all be poets there,
Gazing on the Chiefest Fair.

“ Love ! earth’s love ! and can *we* love
Fixedly, where all things move ?
Can the sinning love each other ?
Mother, mother.
I tremble in thy close embrace,
I feel thy tears adown my face,

Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—

O dreary earthly love !

Loose thy prayer and let me go

To the place where loving is

Yet not sad ; and when is given

Escape to *thee* from this below,

Thou shalt behold me that I wait

For thee beside the happy Gate,

And silence shall be up in heaven

To hear our greeting kiss."

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,

And starts to see beside her bed

The lady with a grandeur spread

Like pathos o'er her face—as one

God-satisfied and earth-undone.

The babe upon her arm was dead !

And the nurse could utter forth no cry—

She was awed by the calm in the mother's eye.

"Wake, Nurse !" the lady said.

"We are waking—he and I—

I, on earth, and he, in sky !

And thou must help me to o'erlay

With garment white this little clay

Which needs no more our lullaby.

"I changed the cruel prayer I made,

And bowed my meekened face and prayed

That God would do His will ! and thus
He did it, nurse ! He parted *us*.
And His sun shews victorious
The dead calm face—and *I* am calm,
And Heaven is hearkening a new psalm.

“ This earthly noise is too anear,
Too loud, and will not let me hear
The little harp. My death will soon
Make silence.”

And a sense of time,
A satisfièd love meanwhile
Which nothing earthly could despoil,
Sang on within her soul.

Oh you,
Earth's tender and impassioned few,
Take courage to entrust your love
To Him, so Named, Who guards above
Its ends and shall fulfil !
Breaking the narrow prayers, that may
Befit your narrow hearts, away
In His broad loving will.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.



*THE LITTLE GIRL'S SONG.**(IN WAR TIME.)*

DO not mind my crying, Papa, I am not crying
for pain,

Do not mind my shaking, Papa, I am not shaking
with fear ;

Though the wild wind is hideous to hear,

And I see the snow and the rain,

When will you come back again,

Papa, Papa ?

Somebody else that you love, Papa,

Somebody else that you dearly love,

Is weary, like me, because you're away.

Sometimes I see her lips tremble and move,

And I seem to know what they're going to say ;

And every day, and all the long day,

I long to cry, " O Mama, Mama,

When will Papa come back again ? "

But before I can say it, I see the pain

Creeping up on her white, white cheek,

As the sweet sad sunshine creeps up the white wall,

And then I am sorry and fear to speak ;

And slowly the pain goes out of her cheek,

As the sad sweet sunshine goes from the wall.

Oh, I wish I were grown up wise and tall,
That I might throw my arms around her neck
And say, " Dear Mama, what is it all
That I see and see and do not see,
In your white, white face all the livelong day ? "

But she hides her grief from a child like me.

When will you come back again,
Papa, Papa ?

Where were you going, Papa, Papa,
All this long while have you been on the sea ?
When she looks as if she saw far away,
Is she thinking of you, and what does she see ?

Are the white sails blowing,
And the blue men rowing,
And are you standing on the high deck
Where we saw you stand till the ship grew grey,
And we watch'd and watch'd till the ship was a speck,
And the dark came first to you, far away ?
I wish I could see what she can see,
But she hides her grief from a child like me.

When will you come back again,
Papa, Papa ?

Don't you remember, Papa, Papa,
How we used to sit by the fire, all three,
And she told me tales while I sat on her knee,
And heard the winter winds roar down the street,
And knock like men at the window pane ;

And the louder they roared, oh, it seemed more sweet
To be warm and warm as we used to be,
Sitting at night by the fire all three.
When will you come back again,
Papa, Papa ?

Papa, I like to sit by the fire :
Why does she sit far away in the cold ?
If I had but somebody wise and old,
That every day I might cry and say,
" Is she changed, do you think, or do I forget ?
Was she always as white as she is to-day ?
Did she never carry her head up higher ? "
Papa, Papa, if I could but know !
Do you think her voice was always so low ?

Did I always see what I seem to see
When I wake up at night and her pillow is wet ?
You used to say her hair was gold—
It looks like silver to me.
But still she tells the same tale that she told,
She sings the same song when I sit on her knee,
And the hour goes on as it went long ago,
When we lived together, all three.
Sometimes my heart seems to sink, Papa,
And I feel as if I could be happy no more.
Is she changed, do you think, Papa,
Or did I dream she was brighter before ?

She makes me remember my snowdrop, Papa,
That I forgot in thinking of you,
The sweetest snowdrop that ever I knew !
But I put it out of the sun and the rain :
It was green and white when I put it away,
It had one sweet ball and green leaves four ;
It was green and white when I found it that day,
It had one pale ball and green leaves four,
But I was not glad of it any more.
Was it changed, do you think, Papa,
Or did I dream it was brighter before ?

Do not mind my crying, Papa, I am not crying with
pain,
Do not mind my shaking, Papa, I am not shaking
with fear ;
Though the wild wind is hideous to hear,
And I see the snow and the rain.
When will you come back again,
Papa, papa ?

Sydney Dobell.



BROTHER AND SISTER.

I.

I CANNOT choose but think upon the time
When our two lives grew like two buds that kiss
At lightest thrill from the bee's swinging chime,
Because the one so near the other is.
He was the elder, and a little man
Of forty inches, bound to show no dread,
And I the girl that, puppy-like, now ran,
Now lagged behind my brother's larger tread.
I held him wise, and when he talked to me
Of snakes and birds, and which God loved the best,
I thought his knowledge marked the boundary
Where men go blind, though angels know the rest.
If he said "Hush!" I tried to hold my breath;
Whenever he said "Come!" I stepped in faith.

II.

School parted us; we never found again
That childish world where our two spirits mingled
Like scents from varying roses that remain
One sweetness, nor can evermore be singled;

Yet the twin habit of that early time
Lingered for long about the heart and tongue :
We had been natives of one happy clime,
And its dear accent to our utterance clung :
Till the dire years whose awful name is Change
Had grasped our souls still yearning in divorce,
And, pitiless, shaped them to two forms that range,
Two elements that sever their life's course.
But were another childhood world my share,
I would be born a little sister there.

George Eliot.



YOUTH AND AGE.



WHEN all the world is young, lad,
And all the trees are green,
And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen ;
Then hey for boot and horse, lad,
And round the world away ;
Young blood must have its course, lad,
And every dog his day.

When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown ;
And all the sport is still, lad,
And all the wheels run down ;
Creep home, and take your place there,
The spent and maimed among :
God grant you find one face there
You loved when you were young.

Charles Kingsley.



A RHYME OF ONE.

YOU sleep upon your mother's breast,
Your race begun,
A welcome, long a wished-for guest,
Whose age is One.

A baby-boy, you wonder why
You cannot run ;
You try to talk—how hard you try !—
You're only One.

Ere long you won't be such a dunce ;
You'll eat your bun
And fly your kite like folks who once
Were only One.

You'll rhyme, and woo, and fight, and joke,
Perhaps you'll pun !
Such feats are never done by folk
Before they're One.

Some day, too, you may have your joy,
And envy none :
Yes, you, yourself, may own a boy
Who isn't One.

He'll dance, and laugh, and crow, he'll do
As you have done :
(You crown a happy home, though you
Are only One).

But when he's grown shall you be here
To share his fun,
And talk of times when he (the dear)
Was hardly One?

Dear child, 'tis your poor lot to be
My little son ;
I'm glad, though I am old you see—
While you are One.

Frederick Locker-Lampson.



TO LINA OSWALD.

(With a Birthday Locket.)

"MY darling wants to see you soon."
I bless the little maid, and thank her ;
To do her bidding night and noon
I draw on Hope—Love's kindest banker.

Your sun is in brightest apparel,
Your birds and your blossoms are gay.
But where is my Jubilant Carol
To welcome so joyous a day ?
I sang for you when you were smaller,
As fair as a fawn, and as wild ;
Now, Lina, you're ten and you're taller—
You elderly child.

I knew you in shadowless hours,
When thought never came with a smart,
You then were the pet of your flowers,
And joy was the child of your heart.
I ever shall love you, and dearly !—
I think when you're even thirteen
You'll still have a heart, and not merely
A flirting machine !

And when time shall have spoiled you of passion,—
Discrown'd what you think sublime,
Oh, I swear that you'll still be the fashion,
And laugh at the antics of time.
To love you will then be no duty ;
But happiness nothing can buy—
There's a bud in your garland, my beauty,
That never can die.

A heart may be bruised and not broken,
A soul may despair and still reck ;—
I send you, dear child, a poor token
Of love, for your dear little neck.
The heart that will beat just below it
Is open and pure as your brow—
May that heart when you come to bestow it,
Be happy as now.

Frederick Locker-Lampson.



WITHIN A
MILE OF EDINBURGH TOWN.



WITHIN a mile of Edinburgh town
We laid our little darling down ;
Our first seed in God's acre sown :

So sweet a place ! Death looks beguiled
Of half his gloom ; or sure he smiled
To win our lovely spirit child.

God giveth his beloved sleep
So calm, within its silence deep,
As angel-guards its watch did keep.

The City looketh solemn and sweet ;
It bares a gentle brow, to greet
The mourners mourning at its feet.

The sea of human life breaks round
This shore o' the dead, with softened sound :
Wild flowers climb each mossy mound,

To place in resting hands their palm,
And breathe their beauty, bloom, and balm,
Folding the dead in fragrant calm.

A softer shadow Grief might wear ;
And old Heartache come gather there
The peace that falleth after prayer.

Poor heart, that danced along the vines
All reeling ripe with wild love-wines,
Thou walk'st with Death among the pines !

Lorn Mother, at the dark grave-door,
She kneeleth, pleading o'er and o'er ;
But it is shut for evermore.

She toileth on, the mournfull'st thing,
At the vain task of emptying
The cistern whence the salt tears spring.

Blind ! blind ! she feels, but cannot read
Aright ; then leans as she would feed
The dear dead lips that never heed.

The spirit of life may leap above,
But in that grave her prisoned dove
Lies, cold to the warm embrace of love,

And dark, tho' all the world be bright ;
And lonely, with a city in sight ;
And desolate in the rainy night.

Ah, God ! when in the glad life-cup
The face of death swims darkly up,
The crowning flower is sure to droop.

And so we laid our darling down,
When summer's cheek grew ripely brown.
And still, tho' grief hath milder grown,

Unto the Stranger's land we cleave,
Like some poor Birds that grieve and grieve,
Round the robbed nest, and cannot leave.

Gerald Massey.



THE DEAD MOTHER.



I.

AS I lay asleep, as I lay asleep,
Under the grass as I lay so deep,
As I lay asleep in my white death-serk
Under the shade of Our Lady's Kirk,
I waken'd up in the dead of night,
I waken'd up in my shroud o' white,
And I heard a cry from far away,
And I knew the voice of my daughter May :
" Mother, mother, come hither to me !
Mother, mother, come hither and see !
Mother, mother, mother dear,
Another mother is sitting here :
My body is bruised, in pain I cry,
All night long on the straw I lie,
I thirst and hunger for drink and meat,
And mother, mother, to sleep were sweet !"
I heard the cry, though my grave was deep,
And awoke from sleep, and awoke from sleep.

II.

I awoke from sleep, I awoke from sleep,
Up I rose from my grave so deep !

The earth was black, but overhead
The stars were yellow, the moon was red ;
And I walk'd along all white and thin,
And lifted the latch and enter'd in.
I reach'd the chamber as dark as night,
And though it was dark my face was white :
"Mother, mother, I look on thee !
Mother, mother, you frighten me !
For your cheeks are thin and your hair is grey !"
But I smiled, and kissed her tears away ;
I smooth'd her hair and I sang a song,
And on my knee I rock'd her long.
"O mother, mother, sing low to me—
I am sleepy now, and I cannot see !"
I kiss'd her, but I could not weep,
And she went to sleep, she went to sleep.

III.

As we lay asleep, as we lay asleep,
My May and I, in our grave so deep,
As we lay asleep in the midnight mirk,
Under the shade of Our Lady's Kirk,
I waken'd up in the dead of night,
Though May my daughter lay warm and white,
And I heard the cry of a little one,
And I knew 'twas the voice of Hugh, my son :
"Mother, mother, come hither to me !
Mother, mother, come hither and see !

Mother, mother, mother dear,
Another mother is sitting here :
My body is bruised and my heart is sad,
But I speak my mind and call them bad ;
I thirst and hunger night and day,
And were I strong I would fly away ! ”
I heard the cry, though my grave was deep,
And awoke from sleep, and awoke from sleep !

IV.

I awoke from sleep, I awoke from sleep,
Up I rose from my grave so deep ;
The earth was black, but overhead
The stars were yellow, the moon was red ;
And I walk'd along all white and thin,
And lifted the latch and enter'd in.
“ Mother, mother, and art thou here ?
I know your face, and I feel no fear ;
Raise me, mother, and kiss my cheek,
For oh, I am weary and sore and weak.”
I smooth'd his hair with a mother's joy,
And he laugh'd aloud, my own brave boy ;
I raised and held him on my breast,
Sang him a song, and bade him rest.
“ Mother, mother, sing low to me—
I am sleepy now, and I cannot see ! ”
I kiss'd him, but I could not weep,
As he went to sleep, as he went to sleep.

V.

As I lay asleep, as I lay asleep,
With my girl and boy in my grave so deep,
As I lay asleep, I awoke in fear,
Awoke, but awoke not my children dear,
And heard a cry so low and weak
From a tiny voice that could not speak :
I heard the cry of a little one,
My bairn that could neither talk nor run,
My little, little one, uncaress'd,
Starving for lack of milk of the breast ;
And I rose from sleep and enter'd in,
And found my little one pinch'd and thin,
And croon'd a song, and hush'd its moan,
And put its lips to my white breast bone ;
And the red, red moon that lit the place
Went white to look at the little face,
And I kiss'd, and kiss'd, but could not weep,
As it went to sleep, as it went to sleep.

VI.

As it lay asleep, as it lay asleep,
I set it down in the darkness deep,
Smooth'd its limbs and laid it out,
And drew the curtains round about ;
Then into the dark, dark room I hied,
Where awake *he* lay, at the woman's side ;

And though the chamber was black as night,
He saw my face, for it was so white !
I gazed in his eyes, and he shriek'd in pain,
And I knew he would never sleep again,
And back to my grave crept silently,
And soon my baby was brought to me ;
My son and daughter beside me rest,
My little baby is on my breast,
Our bed is warm, and our grave is deep,
But he cannot sleep, he cannot sleep.

Robert Buchanan.



BABY.

WHERE did you come from, baby dear ?
Out of the everywhere into here.

Where did you get those eyes so blue ?
Out of the sky as I came through.

What makes the light in them sparkle and spin ?
Some of the starry spikes left in.

Where did you get that little tear ?
I found it waiting when I got here.

What makes your forehead so smooth and high ?
A soft hand stroked it as I went by.

What makes your cheek like a warm white rose ?
I saw something better than any one knows.

Whence that three-cornered smile of bliss ?
Three angels gave me at once a kiss.

Where did you get this pearly ear ?
God spoke, and it came out to hear.

Where did you get those arms and hands ?
Love made itself into bonds and bands.

Feet, whence did you come, you darling things?
From the same box as the cherub's wings.

How did they all just come to be you ?
God thought about me, and so I grew.

But how did you come to us, you dear ?
God thought about you, and so I am here.

George Macdonald.



THE MOTHER'S DREAM.

I 'D a dream to-night
As I fell asleep,
Oh ! the touching sight
Makes me still to weep—
Of my little lad,
Soon to leave me sad,
Aye, the child I had,
But was not to keep.

As in heaven high,
I my child did seek,
There, in train, came by
Children fair and meek,
Each in lily white,
With a lamp alight ;
Each was clear to sight,
But they did not speak.

Then, a little sad,
Came my child in turn,
But the lamp he had,
Oh ! it did not burn ;
He, to clear my doubt,
Said, half turned about,
“ Your tears put it out ;
Mother, never mourn.”

William Barnes.



DEATH IN CHILDBIRTH.



SWEET Martyr of thine Infant and thy Love,
O what a death is thine !
Is this to die ? Then, Love, henceforth approve
This, this of all thy gifts the most divine !
Toll no death-bell ! Matrons, cover
Her white bed with flowers all over ;
With the dark cool violets swathing
A full bosom mother-hearted ;
Under lily-shadows bathing
Brows whose anguish hath departed.
Life with others, Death with thee
Plays a grave game smilingly.
O Death not Death ! through worlds of bliss
The happy new-born Soul is straying.
O Death not Death ! thy Babe in this,
An Angel on the Earth is playing.

Aubrey de Vere.



THE BOY.



TELL me no more of vestal snows
That in the pine-tree's cave-like shade
Or under caverned rocks repose ;
Of Bride or Nun or Maid.
The Girl is not so pure as chilly :
The boy is purer, happier far.
Her brow is like an evening lily—
He shines, the morning-star.

* * * *

His supper ended (half the bread
To yonder sharp-cared greyhound given)
The Boy untired must go to bed—
But first he goes to Heaven.
A child no more, in childhood's tones
Still prays he o'er his mother's knee :
Remember in thy orisons,
O Child, my friend and me !

Aubrey de Vere.



MY SISTER'S SLEEP.

HE fell asleep on Christmas Eve :
At length the long-ungranted shade
Of weary eyelids over-weigh'd
The pain nought else might yet relieve.

Our mother who had leaned all day
Over the bed from chime to chime,
Then raised herself for the first time,
And as she sat her down did pray.

Her little work-table was spread
With work to finish. For the glare
Made by the candle, she had care
To work some distance from the bed.

Without, there was a cold moon up,
Of winter radiance, sheer and thin ;
The hollow halo it was in
Was like an icy crystal cup.

Through the small room, with subtle sound
Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove
And reddened. In its dim alcove
The mirror shed a clearness round.

I had been sitting up some nights
And my tired mind felt weak and blank ;
Like a sharp strengthening wine it drank
The stillness of the broken lights.

Twelve struck. That sound, by dwindling years
Heard in each hour, crept off ; and then
The ruffled silence spread again,
Like water that a pebble stirs.

Our mother rose from where she sat :
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled : no other noise than that.

"Glory unto the newly Born !"
So, as said Angels, did she say ;
Because we were in Christmas Day,
Though it would still be long till morn.

Just then in the room over us
There was a pushing back of chairs,
As some who had sat unawares
So late, now heard the hour and rose.

With anxious softly-stepping haste
Our mother went where Margaret lay,
Fearing the sounds o'erhead—should they
Have broken her long watched-for rest !

She stopped an instant, calm, and turned ;
But suddenly turned back again ;
And all her features seemed in pain
With woe, and her eyes gazed and yearned.

For my part, I but hid my face,
And held my breath and spoke no word :
There was none spoken ; but I heard
The silence for a little space.

Our mother bowed herself and wept :
And both my arms fell, and I said,
" God knows I knew that she was dead."
And there all white my sister slept.

Then, kneeling upon Christmas morn,
A little after twelve o'clock ;
We said, ere the first quarter struck,
" Christ's blessing on the newly-born."

Dante G. Rossetti.



ALONE.



LOVED, wedded and caressed,
Although her children died
She still seemed doubly blest,
Her helpmate at her side
More dear than all the rest !

But sorrow did not kill
The thought of those so dear,
Who all her feelings fill,
As though still with her here
To play about her still.

Her little children's fate
She never could recall,
Yet lived she desolate,
For she had lost them all,—
And then she lost her mate.

When came that hour of woe
And all she loved was gone,
Not sorrow's keenest blow
Left her fond heart alone ;
No parting could it know.

Nigh her he still appears,
The early times so cling ;
Her simple heart still hears
Her children laugh and sing
As in the happy years.

The dead to her remain ;
She heeds each gentle sound
Of theirs within her brain,
And answers smiling round :
“ Sweet love, say that again ! ”

Is it that angels dwell
In that lone mother's breast ?
She knows not what befel
And so is doubly blest :
Not more her heart can tell.

Thos. Gordon Hake.



THE TOYS.



MY little Son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes,
 And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,
 Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,
 I struck him, and dismiss'd
 With hard words and unkiss'd,
 His mother, who was patient, being dead.
 Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,
 I visited his bed,
 But found him slumbering deep,
 With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet
 From his late sobbing wet.
 And I, with moan,
 Kissing away his tears, left others of my own ;
 For, on a table drawn beside his head,
 He had put, within his reach,
 A box of counters and a red-veined stone,
 A piece of glass abraded by the beach,
 And six or seven shells,
 A bottle with bluebells,
 And two French copper coins, ranged there with
 careful art
 To comfort his sad heart.

So when that night I pray'd
To God, I wept, and said :
Ah, when at last we lie with trancèd breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say
"I will be sorry for their childishness."

Coventry Patmore.



MARTIN'S PUZZLE.



THERE she goes up the street, with her book in her hand,

And her Good morning, Martin! Ay, lass, how d'ye do?
Very well, thank you, Martin! I can't understand!

I might just as well never have cobbled a shoe!
I can't understand it. She talks like a song;
Her voice takes your ear like the ring of a glass;
She seems to give gladness while limping along,
Yet sinners ne'er suffer'd like that little lass.

First, a fool of a boy ran her down with a cart.

Then, her fool of a father—a blacksmith by trade—
Why the deuce does he tell us it half broke his heart?
His heart!—where's the leg of the poor little maid?
Well, that's not enough; they must push her down stairs,
To make her go crooked; but why count the list?
If it's right to suppose that our human affairs
Are all order'd by heaven—there, bang goes my fist!

For if angels can look on such sights—never mind !
When you're next to blaspheming, it's best to be mum.
The parson declares that her woes wern't designed ;
But then, with the parson it's all kingdom-come.
Lose a leg, save a soul—a convenient text ;
I call it tea doctrine, not savouring of God.
When poor little Molly wants chastening, why, next
The Archangel Michael might taste of the rod.

But, to see the poor darling go limping for miles
To read books to sick people !—and just of an age
When girls learn the meaning of ribands and smiles !—
Makes me feel like a squirrel that turns in a cage.
The more I push thinking, the more I revolve :
I never get farther ;—and as to her face,
It starts up when near on my puzzle I solve,
And says, " This crush'd body seems such a sad case."

Not that she's for complaining ; she reads to earn pence ;
And from those who can't pay, simple thanks are enough.
Does she leave lamentation for chaps without sense ?
Howsoever, she's made up of wonderful stuff.
Ay, the soul in her body must be a stout cord ;
She sings little hymns at the close of the day,
Though she has but three fingers to lift to the Lord,
And only one leg to kneel down with and pray.

What I ask is, why persecute such a poor dear,
If there's Law above all? Answer that if you can!
Irreligious I'm not; but I look on this sphere
As a place where a man should just think like a man.
It isn't fair dealing! But contrariwise,
Do bullets in battle the wicked select?
Why, then it's all chance-work! And yet, in her eyes,
She holds a fixed something by which I am checked.

Yonder riband of sunshine aslope on the wall,
If you eye it a minute 'll have the same look;
So kind! and so merciful! God of us all!
It's the very same lesson we get from the Book.
Then, is Life but a trial? Is that what is meant?
Some must toil, and some perish, for others below
The injustice to each spreads a common content;
Ay! I've lost it again, for it can't be quite so.

She's the victim of fools: that seems near the mark.
On earth there are engines and numerous fools.
Why the Lord can permit them, we're still in the dark;
He does, and in some sort of way they're His tools.
It's a roundabout way, with respect let me add,
If Molly goes crippled that we may be taught;
But, perhaps it's the only way, though it's so bad;
In that case we'll bow down our heads,—as we ought.

But the worst of *me* is, that when I bow my head,
I perceive a thought wriggling away in the dust,
And I follow its tracks, quite forgetful, instead
Of humble acceptance : for, question I must !
Here's a creature made carefully—carefully made !
Put together with craft, and then stamped on, and why ?
The answer seems nowhere : it's discord that's played.
The sky's a blue dish ! an implacable sky !

Stop a moment. I seize an idea from the pit.
They tell us that discord, though discord, alone,
Can be harmony when the notes properly fit :
Am I judging all things from a single false tone ?
Is the Universe one immense organ, that rolls
From devils to angels ? I'm blind with the sight.
It pours such a splendour on heaps of poor souls !
I might try at kneeling with Molly to-night.

George Meredith.



DAISY'S VALENTINES.



ALL night, through Daisy's sleep, it seems,
Have ceaseless "rat-tats" thundered ;
All night through Daisy's rosy dreams
Have devious Postmen blundered,
Delivering letters round her bed,—
Suggestive missives, sealed with red,
And franked, of course, with due Queen's-head—
While Daisy lay and wondered.

But now, when chirping birds begin,
And Day puts off the Quaker,—
When Cook renews her morning din,
And rates the cheerful baker,—
She dreams her dream no dream at all,
For, just as pigeons come to call,
Winged letters flutter down, and fall
Around her head, and wake her.

Yes, there they are ! With quirk and twist,
And fraudulent arts directed ;
(Save Grandpapa's dear stiff old " fist,"
Through all disguise detected ;)
But which is his,—her young Lothair's—
Who wooed her on the schoolroom stairs
With three sweet cakes, and two ripe pears,
In one neat pile collected ?

'Tis there, be sure. Though, truth to speak
(If truth may be permitted),
I doubt that young " gift-bearing Greek "
Is scarce for fealty fitted :
For has he not (I grieve to say),
To two loves more, on this same day,
In just this same emblazoned way,
His transient vows transmitted ?

He may be true. Yet, Daisy dear,
That even youth grows colder
You'll find is no new thing, I fear ;
And when you're somewhat older
You'll read of one Dardanian boy
Who " wooed with gifts " a maiden coy—
Then took the morning train to Troy,
In spite of all he'd told her.

But wait. Your time will come. And then,
Obliging Fates, please send her
The nicest thing you have in men,
Sound-hearted, strong, and tender ;
The kind of man, dear Fates, you know,
That feels how shyly Daisies grow,
And what soft things they are, and so
Will spare to spoil or mend her.

Austin Dobson.



THE CRADLE.



HOW steadfastly she'd worked at it !
How lovingly had drest,
With all her would-be-mother's wit,
That little rosy nest !

How lovingly she'd hang on it !—
It sometimes seemed, she said,
There lay beneath its coverlet
A little sleeping head.

He came at last, the tiny guest,
Ere bleak December fled ;
That rosy nest he never prest—
Her coffin was his bed.

Austin Dobson.



A BRISTOL FIGURE.



RAISED on a little carven corner shelf,
 Half hidden by a curtain, stands a figure,
 Too small to have been left there by itself,
 But that it seems to claim a right to space—
 This baby gentleman with shirt of lace,
 And small forefinger curving round a trigger.

A trigger only, for the dainty hand
 Has lost the rest of what was once a pistol,
 But still retains the spirit of command—
 The dandy grace heroic of the boy—
 That makes me think of Dresden and of Troy,
 Although I recognise the paste of Bristol.

So more from habit than desire to know,
 Down from its lonely stage I softly whisk it,
 And turn it up, and, sure enough, below,
 "A triangle enclosing two crossed swords—
 Impressed," a mark which plainest proof affords
 The piece is nothing less than Bristol biscuit.

And then I hear a hurried cry of "Oh,
Don't touch." And, ere the sentence is completed,
A slender lady with a face of woe
Has gently seized the figure from my hand,
Replaced it carefully upon its stand,
And bid me in a chilly voice "Be seated."

"Your business, sir," she says ; and I begin
To tell this victim of the china fashion
That I have come in search of next of kin
To some one who has died without a will,
And soon her eyes grow kind, attentive, still,
Without a symptom of their recent passion.

Yes—as she sat there silent in her chair,
I thought I never saw more sweet a creature,
And when she spoke I found her wise as fair ;
Indeed 'twas hard my senses to convince
She was the lady who a moment since
Showed signs of "temper" both in voice and feature.

And as I rose I said, "I thank you much
For all your courtesies to me, a stranger.
I fear you thought me very rude to touch
Your Bristol boy. I have a piece or two
Worthy of such a connoisseur as you,
And know the shock of seeing them in danger.

"'Tis injured, but indubitably fine,
And, if you'll trust in one who has offended,
I know a man—a genius in his line—
Whom I and just a very few employ.
He will restore for you your little boy,
So that you'll scarcely know he has been mended."

"No, no, forgive me, but for me the charm"
(Her face grew strangely solemn as she spoke it)
"Lies only in the little broken arm.
Restore my boy—you knew not what you said.
I had a little son, sir, who is dead,
And I was angry with him when he broke it."

Cosmo Monkhouse.



FLOWERS AND SNOW

*Part I.*

IT was the pleasing summer time,
When winds were soft as rose or rhyme,
And, in the soothing evengloom,
The windows of an English home,
Open at dusk, let odours in
Of lily and early jessamine,
And mignonette, and linden flowers
Late-lingering in their leafy bowers ;
There father grave and mother mild
Sat gossiping of friend and child :
And, favoured by the deepening shade,
Thoughts that, in daylight half afraid,
Sank in a tremor or a blush,
Found utterance in the twilight hush
All unabashed. And thus they spoke :

He. Well, well, my dear, I meant no joke,
Although it seems and sounds so wild,

To ask to keep a child, a child
For ever. Yes ; they *must* grow up,
These mites. But if some chemic Cup
Of Babyhood were in my skill,
I almost think I have the will—
I think—I don't think—ah, my dear,
Mysterious is this mortal sphere ;
I only wish——

[And here they laugh.]

She. Ah, now you are too wise by half ;
Original too. How new the thought
That life with mystery is fraught !
But, dearest love, I understand !
[And here she gently touched his hand.]
We want, we two, impossible things—
To see the flight, yet clip the wings,
To keep the bud, yet find the flower,
Live on, yet pause upon the hour.
You dread the day, and so do I—
[Here in the dusk he heard her sigh ;
Speech made a pause, sad but unvest,
The sermon stopt beside the text,
And it was his to rebegin it :]

He. A house without a baby in it—
Yes, dear, that is the thing we dread !

How we shall miss the pattering tread ;
The lisping tongue, the fearless eye
That keeps its memory of the sky ;
The wit that has not learned to think,
Yet takes our wisdom to the brink,
At one touch, of the infinite ;
The simpleness of child delight ;
The unabashed, unwondering hope,
That, ignorant yet of mortal scope,
Asks for the sun, the moon, the air,
And sweets, with equal lack of care—
(Oh, for a trust so much divine !
“ Behold all this is mine and thine ! ”)
But, after all, what can we do ?
The children must grow up, dear.

She.

True.

[Here an old friend looked in, to say
His daughter was betrothed that day,
Going to be married within the year,
But likely to live always near.
And when the young birds leave the nest,
To have them near at hand was best :
His eldest son was coining gold
Out in New Zealand. This all told,
Our couple went to sleep that night
Leaving their problem open quite.]

Part II.

It was mid-winter, and the snow
Fell on a grave shut long ago
Over the coffin of a child ;
And father grave and mother mild
Sat in the firelit evengloom
And talked.

He. How quiet is our home ;
But in our neighbour's I can catch,
At moments when they lift the latch,
The noise of pattering baby feet,
And baby crying, scarce less sweet
Than baby laughter.

She. Even so ;
And how, John Anderson, my jo,
Wise as you are—how would you have it ?
You cannot eat your cake and save it.
[We boast, we men, but after all
'Tis women who are practical.
And when we prune our waxen wings,
They find the heaven of common things.]
Well, Jane is hearty : Jess is wed :
And Tom is prospering : so is Ned :
And——
[Here the fuffing of the fire
Fills up a pause. Their hands draw nigher ;

A sound of bells is in the air
And turns the silence into prayer ;
Then softly speaks that mother mild :]

She. And yet, my dear, we have a child ;
I see her now, I hear her voice
(Shall we have out the hoarded toys ?)
I hear her little trampling feet—
She climbs your knee, she takes her seat—

He. She croons a song. She droops her eyes ;
She sleeps. Dead darling ! Yes, she dies.

She. She is the only child we have :
Soft falls the snow upon her grave :
Dead darling ! Though the tears must fall
We keep our child, dear, after all.

He. How strange that she should go that night :
I never understood it quite.
Gone, gone ! But to this very day,
Can you not see the child at play
As I do ? Yes, I know you can.
Lord, Lord, how poor a thing is man !

She. But after all we keep our child—

Thou incoherent mother mild !
My tale grows weak—nay, more, 'tis false,

For even by love, within four walls,
Such things are never said right out,
But speech goes faltering round about,
In dread lest rough words break the locks
Threefold of heavenly paradox.
But, father grave !—but, mother mild !
Oh, did you ever lose a child,—
To weep, and ask what God could mean
When Spring puts on its silent green,
As if no change, no change had come ;
To weep, and call, and then sit dumb ;
To weep, and think that Life was gone,
And death would ne'er be clothed upon ;
And then to see her, young and bright,
In many a vision of the night—
And then to see your child at play
In every sparkle of the day,
And feel in every conquered smart
The beating of her glad young heart,
And find that, losing, you had won
More than an empire in the sun ?

Matthew Browne.



PHILIP, MY KING.

LOOK at me with thy large brown eyes,
Philip, my King,
Round whom the enshadowing purple lies
Of babyhood's royal dignities :
Lay on my neck thy tiny hand
With love's invisible sceptre laden ;
I am thine Esther to command
Till thou shalt find a queen-handmaiden,
Philip, my King.

O, the day when thou goest a-wooing,
Philip, my King !
When some beautiful lips art suing,
And, some gentle heart's bars undoing,
Thou dost enter love-crowned, and there
Sittest love-glorified. Rule kindly,
Tenderly, over thy kingdom fair,
For we that love, ah ! we love so blindly,
Philip, my King.

Up from thy sweet mouth, up to thy brow,
Philip, my King,
The spirit that low lies sleeping now
May rise like a giant and make men bow
As to one heaven-chosen among his peers :
My Saul, than thy brethren taller and fairer,
Let me behold thee in future years ;—
Yet thy head needeth a circlet rarer,
Philip, my King ;

A wreath not of gold, but palm, one day,
Philip, my King.
Thou too must tread, as we trod, a way
Thorny and cruel and cold and grey :
Rebels within thee, and foes without
Will snatch thy crown. But march on, glorious,
Martyr yet monarch : till angels shout
As thou sit'st, at the feet of God, victorious :
“ Philip, the King ! ”

Dinah Maria Craik.



To R. L. S.



A CHILD
Curious and innocent
Slips from his Nurse, and rejoicing
Loses himself in the Fair.

Through the jostle and din
Wandering, he revels,
Dreaming, desiring, possessing ;
Till, of a sudden,
Tired and afraid, he beholds
The sordid assemblage
Just as it is ; and he runs
With a sob to his Nurse
(Lighting at last on him)
And in her motherly bosom
Cries him to sleep.

Thus through the world
Seeing and feeling and knowing,
Goes Man, till at last,
Tired of experience, he turns
To the friendly and comforting breast
Of the old nurse, Death.

William Ernest Henley.

QUESTIONS OF THE HOUR.

“DO angels wear white dresses, say ?
Always, or only in the summer ? Do
Their birthdays have to come like mine, in May ?
Do they have scarlet sashes then, or blue ?

“When little Jessie died last night,
How could she walk to Heaven—it is so far ?
How did she find the way without a light ?
There wasn't even any moon or star.

“Will she have red or golden wings ?
Then will she have to be a bird, and fly ?
Do they take men like presidents and kings
In hearses with black plumes clear to the sky ?

“How old is God ? Has He grey hair ?
Can He see yet ? Where did He have to stay
Before—you know—He had made—Anywhere ?
Who does He pray to—when He has to pray ?

“How many drops are in the sea ?
How many stars ?—well, then, you ought to know
How many flowers are on an apple-tree ?
How does the wind look when it doesn't blow ?

“Where does the rainbow end? And why
Did—Captain Kidd—bury the gold there? When
Will this world burn? And will the firemen try
To put the fire out with the engines then?

“If you should ever die, may we
Have pumpkins growing in the garden, so
My fairy godmother can come for me,
When there's a prince's ball, and let me go?

“Read Cinderella just once more—
What makes—men's other wives—so mean?”
I know

That I was tired, it may be cross, before
I shut the printed book for her to go.

Hours later, from a child's white bed
I heard the timid, last queer question start :
“Mamma, are you—my stepmother?” it said.
The innocent reproof crept to my heart.

S. M. B. Platt.



*LAST WORDS OVER A LITTLE
BED AT NIGHT.*



GOOD night, pretty sleepers of mine—
I never shall see you again :
Ah, never in shadow or shine ;
Ah, never in dew or in rain.

In your small dreaming-dresses of white,
With the wild-bloom you gathered to-day
In your quiet shut hands, from the light
And the dark you will wander away.

Though no graves in the bee-haunted grass,
And no love in the beautiful sky,
Shall take you as yet, you will pass,
With this kiss, through these tear-drops.
Good-bye !

With less gold and more gloom in their hair,
When the buds near have faded to flowers,
Three faces may wake here as fair—
But older than yours are, by hours !

Good night, then, lost darlings of mine—
I never shall see you again :
Ah, never in shadow or shine,
Ah, never in dew or in rain.

S. M. B. Piatt.

THE WATCH OF A SWAN.

I.

I READ somewhere that a swan, snow-white,
In the sun all day, in the moon all night,
Alone by a little grave would sit
Waiting, and watching it.

II.

Up out of the lake her mate would rise,
And call her down with his piteous cries
Into the waters still and dim ;
With cries she would answer him.

III.

Hardly a shadow would she let pass
Over the baby's cover of grass ;
Only the wind might dare to stir
The lily that watched with her.

IV.

Do I think that the swan was an angel? Oh,
I think it was only a swan, you know,
That for some sweet reason, winged and wild,
Had the love of a bird for a child.

S. M. B. Piatt.

*THE THOUGHT OF ASTYANAX
BESIDE IÜLUS.*



YES, all the doves begin to moan,—
But it is not the doves alone.
Some trouble, that you never heard
In any tree from breath of bird,
That reaches back to Eden lies
Between your wind-flower and my eyes.

I fear it was not well, indeed,
Upon so sad a day to read
So sad a story. But the day
Is full of blossoms, do you say,—
And how the sun does shine? I know.
These things do make it sadder, though.

You'd cry, if you were not a boy,
About this mournful tale of Troy?
Then do not laugh at me, if I—
Who am too old, you know, to cry—
Just hide my face awhile from you,
Down here among these drops of dew.

Must I for sorrow look so far ?
This baby headed like a star,
Afraid of Hector's horse-hair plume
(His one sweet child, whose bitter doom
So piteous seems—oh, tears and tears !—)
Has he been dust three thousand years ?

Yet when I see his mother fold
The pretty cloak she stitched with gold
Around another boy, and say :
“ He would be just your age to-day,
With just your hands, your eyes, your hair—”
Her grief is more than I can bear.

S. M. B. Piatt.



THE CONFESSION OF MY
NEIGHBOUR.

(After she had been fortunate)



YES, this is what my neighbour said that night,
In the still shadow of her stately house,
(Fortune came to her when her head was white,)
What time dark leaves were weird in withering
boughs

And each late rose sighed with its latest breath,
"This sweet world is too sweet to end in death."

But this is what my neighbour said to me :

"I grieved my youth away for that or this.
I had upon my hand the ring you see,
With pretty babies in my arms to kiss,
And one man said I had the sweetest eyes,
He was quite sure, this side of Paradise.

"But then our crowded cottage was so small,
And spacious grounds would blossom full in sight ;
Then one would fret me with an India shawl,
And one flash by me in a diamond's light ;
And one would show me wealth of precious lace,
And one look coldly from her painted face.

“I did not know that I had everything,
Till—I remembered it. Ah me! Ah me!
I who had ears to hear the wild-bird sing,
And eyes to see the violets. It must be
A bitter fate that jewels the grey hair,
Which once was golden and had flowers to wear.

“In my old house, in my old room, for years
The haunted cradle of my little ones gone
Would hardly let me look at it for tears.
O my lost nurslings! I stay on and on,
Only to miss you from the empty light
Of my low fire—with my own grave in sight.

“In the old house, too, in its own old place,
Handsome and young, and looking towards the
gate
Through which it flushed to meet her, is a face
For which, ah me! I never more shall wait—
For which, ah me! I wait for ever, I
Who, for the hope of it, can surely die.

“Young men write gracious letters here to me,
That ought to fill this mother-heart of mine.
The youth in this one crowds all Italy!
This glimmers with the far Pacific's shine.
The first poor little hand that warmed my breast
Wrote this—the date is old: you know the rest.

“ Oh, if I only could have back my boys,
With their lost gloves and books for me to find,
Their scattered playthings and their pleasant noise !
I sit here in the splendour growing blind,
With hollow hands that backward reach, and ache
For the sweet trouble which the children make.”

S. M. B. Platt.



SELF - COMFORTED.

THE ragged child across the street
Stared at the Child that looked so sweet.

"I'll have a whiter dress than you,
And wear some prettier rosebuds, too ;

"And not be proud a bit," she said,
"I thank you, miss,—when I am dead."

S. M. B. Piatt.



BLIND MAN'S HOLIDAY.

WHEN vanished is the gold and violet,
And all the pearl and opal turned to grey,
We call the drowsy children from their play :
"Come bonny birds, to roost ; the sun has set."
And still they cry, "We are not sleepy yet ;
Only a little longer may we stay—
Only a little while," half-sighing say :
"We were so still, we hoped you might forget."

We, too, delay with childish stratagem
The while we break our playthings one by one,
Sobbing our foolish hearts out over them ;
Till comes the wise nurse Death, at set of sun,
When wearied out and piteous we run
Weeping to her and clasp her garments' hem.

Graham R. Tomson.



A CHILD'S DAY.

WHEN I was a little child
It was always golden weather.
My days stretched out so long
From rise to set of sun,
I sang and danced and smiled—
My light heart like a feather—
From morn to even-song ;
But the child's days are done.

I used to wake with the birds—
The little birds wake early,
For the sunshine leaps and plays
On the mother's head and wing ;
And the clouds were white as curds ;
The apple trees stood pearly ;
I always think of the child's days
As one unending Spring.

I knew where all flowers grew.
I used to lie in the meadow
Ere reaping-time and mowing-time
And carting home the hay.
And O the skies were blue !
O drifting light and shadow !
It was another time and clime—
The little child's sweet day.

And in the long day's waning
The skies grew rose and amber
And palest green and gold,
With a moon's white flame.
And if came wind and raining,
Grey hours I don't remember ;
Nor how the warm year waxèd cold,
And deathly Autumn came.

Only of that young time
The bright things I remember :
How orchard boughs were laden red,
And blackberries so brave
Came ere the frost and rime—
Ere the dreary dark November,
With dripping black boughs overhead,
And dead leaves on a grave.

The years have come and gone,
And brought me many a pleasure,
And many a gift and gain
From near and from afar,
And dear work gladly done,
And dear love without measure,
And sunshine after rain,
And in the night a star.

The years have come and gone,
And one hath brought me sorrow ;
Yet I shall sing to ease my pain
For the hours I must stay.
They are passing one by one,
And I wait with hope the morrow ;
But indeed I am not fain
Of a long long day.

It is well for a little child
Whose heart is blithe and merry
To find too short its golden day—
Long morn and afternoon.
So many flowers grow wild
And many a fruit and berry :
Long day, too short for work and play,—
The night comes too soon.

It was well for that little child.
But its day is gone for ever,
And a wounded heart will ache
In the sunlight gold and gay.
O, the night is cool and mild
To all things that smart with fever!
The older heart had time to break
In the little child's long day.

Katharine Tynan.



LOQUITUR MATER.



THERE passed a mystery by that touched my heart,
What time, O Child, your growing hands you laid
About my life, and drew therefrom a part
Of that which sharing Time and I had made.

You were my prisoner ; and, upon a day
(The Spring had brought her wagon full of flowers
That day for you), along my arm you lay,
Freed and unblindfold, struggling with new powers.

And you went free ; and I am free no more,
O never more, though quick you be or dead.
And when I walk your shadow goes before,
And when I sleep, its face lies near my head.

Vernon Blackburn.



DAISY.



WHERE the thistle lifts a purple crown
Six foot out of the turf,
And the harebell shakes on the windy hill—
O the breath of the distant surf!—

The hills look over on the south,
And southward dreams the sea ;
And with the sea-breeze hand in hand
Came innocence and she.

Where 'mid the gorse the raspberry
Red for the gatherer springs,
Two children did we stray, and talk
Wise, idle, childish things.

She listened with big-lipped surprise,
Breast-deep 'mid flower and spine :
Her skin was like a grape whose veins
Run snow instead of wine.

She knew not the sweet words she spake,
Nor knew her own sweet way ;
But there's never a bird, so sweet a song
Thronged in whose throat that day

Oh, there were flowers in Storrington
On the turf and on the spray ;
But the sweetest flower on Sussex hills
Was the Daisy-flower that day !

A berry red, a winsome look,
A still word—strings of sand !
And yet they made my wild, wild heart
Fly down to her little hand.

For standing artless as the air,
And candid as the skies,
She took the berries with her hand
And the love with her sweet eyes.

The fairest things have fleetest end ;
Their scent survives their close ;
But the rose's scent is bitterness
To him that loved the rose.

She looked a little wistfully,
Then went her sunshine way :
The sea's eye had a mist on it,
And the leaves fell from the day.

She went her unremembering way,
She went, and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone
And partings yet to be.

She left me marvelling why my soul
Was sad that she was glad ;
At all the sadness in the sweet,
The sweetness in the sad.

Still, still I seemed to see her, still
Look up with soft replies,
And take the berries with her hand,
And the love with her lovely eyes.

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
I think, without some moan ;
For we are born in others' pain,
And perish in our own.

Francis Thompson.



THE POPPY.

To Monica.

SUMMER set lip to earth's bosom bare,
And left the flushed print in a poppy there :
Like a yawn of fire from the grass it came,
And the fanning wind puffed it to flapping flame.

With burnt mouth red like a lion's it drank
The blood of the sun as he slaughtered sank,
And dipped its cup in the purpurate shine
When the eastern conduits ran with wine.

Till it grew lethargied with fierce bliss,
And hot as a swinked gipsy is,
And drowsed in sleepy savageries,
With mouth wide a-pout for a sultry kiss.

A child and man paced side by side,
Treading the skirts of eventide ;
But between the clasp of his hand and hers
Lay, felt not, twenty withered years.

She turned, with the rout of her dusk South hair,
And saw the sleeping gipsy there ;
And snatched and snapped it in swift child's whim,
With—"Keep it, long as you live !"—to him.

And his smile, as nymphs from their laving meres,
Trembled up from a bath of tears ;
And joy, like a mew sea-rocked apart,
Tossed on the wave of his troubled heart.

For *he* saw what she did not see,
That—as kindled by its own fervency—
The verge shrivelled inward smoulderingly :

And suddenly twixt his hand and hers
He knew the twenty withered years—
No flower, but twenty shrivelled years.

“ Was never such thing until this hour,”
Low to his heart he said ; “ the flower
Of sleep brings wakening to me,
And of oblivion memory.

“ Was never this thing to me,” he said,
“ Though with bruised poppies my feet are red ! ”
And again to his own heart very low :
“ O child ! I love, for I love and know.

“ But you, who love nor know at all
The diverse tables in Love’s guest-hall,
Where some rise early, few sit long ;
In how differing accents hear the throng
His great Pentecostal tongue ;

"Who know not love from amity,
Or my reported self from me ;
A fair fit gift is this, meseems,
You give—this withering flower of dreams.

"O frankly fickle, and fickle true,
Do you know what the days will do to you ?
To your love and you what the days will do,
O frankly fickle, and fickle true ?

"You have loved me, Fair, three lives—or days ;
'Twill pass with the passing of my face.
But where *I* go, your face goes too,
To watch lest I play false to you.

"I am but, my sweet, your foster-lover,
Knowing well when certain years are over
You vanish from me to another ;
Yet I know, and love, like the foster-mother.

"So, frankly fickle, fickle true !
For my brief life-while I take from you
This token, fair and fit, meseems,
For me—this withering flower of dreams."

* * * * *

The sleep-flower sways in the wheat its head,
Heavy with dreams, as that with bread :
The goodly grain and the sun-flushed sleeper
The reaper reaps, and Time the reaper.

I hang 'mid men my needless head,
And my fruit is dreams, as theirs is bread :
The goodly men and the sun-hazed sleeper
Time shall reap, but after the reaper
The world shall glean of me, me the sleeper !

• Love ! love ! your flower of withered dream
In leavèd rhyme lies safe, I deem,
Sheltered and shut in a nook of rhyme,
From the reaper man, and his reaper Time.

Love ! I fall into the claws of Time :
But lasts within a leavèd rhyme
All that the world of me esteems—
My withered dreams, my withered dreams.

Francis Thompson.



A SONG OF YOUTH AND AGE.

WATCHING a flight of fluttering laughter
Dip their wings in her sparkling eyes,
How could I think her, how could I dream her
A thing that dies !

“When you are older than you can number,
Then do you die ?” she said.
Seems the sum of our days so sumless,
Little fair head ?

The ills are many, the days are few ;
The ills they bring
That is the thing we cannot number,
The only thing.

Thou who art whole in thine ignorance,
Why should they make thee sick
With the damned drug knowledge ? Nay,
keep thou
Thy happy arithmetic !

Work not the sum of the days, dear,
It will make thee sad ;
For in that cold sum we but subtract,
And never, never add.

Thy sums make only the head ache,
That sum makes the heart ;
When it is done we say good-night,
And lay life's slate apart.

When it is done we are very tired,
And ready to say good-night ;
And we sleep so sound, we never waken
Till morning, mite ;
Until we hear God saying,
"Open your eyes, it's light."

Yea, on this frozen Alp of life
Is the hospice we call Death,
Whose trusty sickness seeketh us,
Seeketh, and rescueth.

Ah ! gladder lore thou art mistress in ;
Couched at thy feet
Enlighten my knowledge, teach me—dull
knower—
The Art to Know Not, sweet !

Alack and alack, I fear me
There is not in all the schools
A teacher can teach us, once forgetting,
Again its rules !

Life's rotten flooring her light feet shake not ;
Scarce can *I* think her a thing that dies,
Watching the wanton laughters
Spray her sweet eyes.

Francis Thompson.



TO MY GODCHILD,

FRANCIS M. W. M.



THIS labouring, vast Tellurian galleon,
Riding at anchor off the orient sun,
Had broken its cable, and stood out to space
Down some froze Arctic of the ærial ways :
And now, back warping from the inclement main,
Its vaporous shroudage drenched with icy rain,
It swung into its azure roads again ;
When, floated on the prosperous sun-gale, you
Lit, a white halcyon auspice, 'mid our frozen crew.

To the sun, stranger, surely you belong,
Giver of golden days and golden song ;
Nor is it by an all unhappy plan
You bear the name of me, his constant Magian.
Yet ah ! from any other that it came,
Lest fated to my fate you be, as to my name.
When at the first those tidings did they bring,
My heart turned troubled at the ominous thing :
Though well may such a title him endower,
For whom a poet's prayer implores a poet's power.
The Assisian, who kept plighted faith to three,

To Song, to Sanctitude, and Poverty,
(In two alone of whom most singers prove
A fatal faithfulness of during love!) ;
He the sweet Sales, of whom we scarcely ken
How God he could love more, he so loved men ;
The crown and crowned of Laura and Italy ;
And Fletcher's fellow—from these, and not from me,
Take you your name, and take your legacy !

Or if a right successive you declare
When worms, for ivies, intertwine my hair,
Take but this Poesy that now followeth
My clayey hest with sullen servile breath,
Made then your happy freedman by testating death.
My song I do but hold for you in trust,
I ask you but to blossom from my dust.
When you have compassed all weak I began,
Diviner poet, and ah ! diviner man ;
The man at feud with the perduring child
In you before song's altar nobly reconciled ;
From the wise heavens I half shall smile to see
How little a world, which owned you, needed me.
If, while you keep the vigils of the night,
For your wild tears make darkness all too bright,
Some lone orb through your lonely window peeps,
As it played lover over your sweet sleeps ;
Think it a golden crevice in the sky,
Which I have pierced but to behold you by !

And when, immortal mortal, droops your head,
And you, the child of deathless song, are dead ;
Then, as you search with unaccustomed glance
The ranks of Paradise for my countenance,
Turn not your tread along the Uranian sod
Among the bearded counsellors of God ;
For if in Eden as on earth are we,
I sure shall keep a younger company :
Pass where beneath their rangèd gonfalons
The starry cohorts shake their shielded suns,
The dreadful mass of their enridgèd spears ;
Pass where majestic the eternal peers,
The stately choice of the great Saintdom, meet—
A silvern segregation, globed complete
In sandalled shadow of the Triune feet ;
Pass by where wait, young poet-wayfarer,
Your cousined clusters, emulous to share
With you the roseal lightnings burning 'mid their
hair ;
Pass the crystalline sea, the Lampads seven :—
Look for me in the nurseries of Heaven.

Francis Thompson.





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W. M.

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